

## Coincidence by [Girl\\_who\\_talks\\_with\\_trees](#)

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**Summary:**

meeting the love of his life was just a coincidence, or not ?

## 1. Meeting Again

It has been five years since the upside down adventure, and unfortunately life for Steve Harrington hadn't improved much. He hadn't attempt the college witch his family wanted him to go, so his father had kicked him out of their big house disinheriting his own son and leaving him with nothing more than his BMW. At first, Steve had thought that the decision was just for some days. In fact he had been thrown out of his home so many times before. But after three entire weeks he understood that this time was different. His father had made sure to cut down every access for Steve to any money, so he had to go out of the police school because he couldn't afford it anymore. He came back to Hawkins to try to make some money. He started to work as a waiter in a local restaurant where the uniform consisted even of roller skates, it was the ultimate fashion. At first he made so many falls that his boss was about to fire him, luckily tons of girls from the near school came just because of his pretty face, so at the end Steve still worked there after two years. He lived in a rented shitty apartment in the worst part of the town. He had just the kitchen a small bathroom and an old couch witch served as a bed. His life was very difficult and it was hard to live day after day. He hadn't any money left even if the rent was kind of low since he payed only for gas, water and electricity without the heating. He struggled the most in winter because of the cold, he often got sick but hadn't nobody there to take care of him, also he didn't have any medical insurance, it was too expensive.

This Autumn things had become more complicated. His good old car had broken down while he was going to work. He had to repair it but the damage was too big for doing it all by himself, so now he had a broken car right in front of his falling apart apartment. Steve tried to estimate the cost of the repairing, but the amount was very expensive and he couldn't afford it. He decided to pick up another job in a Bar 24/7 just two blocks away from the restaurant, he had to work from 10:00 pm to 3:00 am as a Bar-man in order to save some money for the mechanic. The hardest part of his day was going to work and coming home by roller skates. It was just the best option he could think of. But this Autumn every fucking day was raining and Steve was sure that the winter would have been the coldest of his entire

life. Getting wet of icy rain wasn't really healthy so soon he started to had coughing fits and fevers; but he couldn't really stop working and take some days off, he needed the low salary, so he put a big charming smile on his face every morning and went to work anyway.

A Saturday around 3:15 am, Steve was tiredly skating his way back home. He was so exhausted from staying up all day serving stupid girls at the restaurant and lonely men at the bar. It was raining hard and he was soaked to the bone, he shivered from the cool wind that was blowing hard on the sleeping city. His feet were hurting so bad in the restaurant's roller skates, he was going on just for inertia. Steve was too numb to hear a car coming from the perpendicular road. When he arrived at the crossroad the firelight was red, but usually at that time of the night there wasn't anybody on the streets, so he skated on but suddenly the headlights of a car were illuminating him. He was so tired and cold that he couldn't muster any energy to move aside or just try to avoid the nest collision. The hit was not hard because the car slowed down as soon as he saw Steve, but the asphalt was slippery from the rain and the impact was inevitable. The already wet boy was thrown few meters away hitting hard on his temple and right shoulder and even harder his right ribs.

Everything was confused: sounds of a car door open and a man that was shouting at him, the faint dripping of the rain on his soaked old jacket. Even pain wasn't so clear, he had hit his head pretty bad. In his mouth there was an acid taste that he didn't remember to have, probably he had vomited, hoping not all over himself. Now someone was shaking him hard, pulling his upper body from the icy ground. Steve was trying to wake up but he barely had the energy to blink. After that everything went black and cold, he thought to hear someone shouting his name.

When he finally woke up was in a comfortable big two size bed. In the room there was a dim artificial light, he was covered with clean white sheets and different warm blankets. He tried to turn his head right, but a rush of pain prevented him to move. From his right a familiar voice started to speak:

"You should be more careful, Harrington ! I almost asphalted you with my car." He said almost laughing.

Steve was in so much pain that he didn't know how to respond. It seemed that the man had known him long enough to call him by his surname. He tried to sit up but a big warm hand showed him off.

"Hey princess, take it easy!"

That was it! Nobody had ever called him like that apart from ....

"Who are y-you ?" He tried knowing already the sad answer.

"You beat your head pretty hard if you don't recognise me, Harrington" Billy laughed.

"Hargrove ? Is that y-" He couldn't finish the question because a fit of cough cut him off.

His entire body was convulsing, soon there was a big hand on his forehead to check his temperature, while Steve was trying with his left hand to stop the coughing. At that moment he realized that he was all packed up. Around his head there was a thick bandage that was covering his right temple, all over his torso and up his right shoulder. He could feel a thick coating of gauze that was preventing him to move.

After a few minutes his body calmed down and he could finally see Billy in face. He hadn't changed much: still long hairs, tan skin, a mass of muscles, but there was something different. He wasn't smirking as he always did at school, now he was frowning, not really looking Steve in the eyes.

"You have an high fever, what the hell were you thinking ? You were skating in the middle of the night, soaked, freezing and too stupid to see the red light ! What the fuck man !" Now Billy sounded more angry than amused.

"I had finished my turn at the High Bar, where I work. I was going home" Steve offered.

"With roller skates at your feet ?"

"Well my car is broken and I didn't had the time to fix it so I just used what I had"

“ You opted for rollers ? Why don’t take the bus ?”

“I ...” He didn’t know what to say to Billy. It was too embarrassing to admit to himself that he couldn’t even buy food at this rate, let alone to Hargrove. Instead of answering a doubt formed in his mind.

“Where I am ? And why are you here ?” he said all in a breath.

“First you answer my question, because in my house you do so.” Billy said in a very threatening manner. Why do he care ? Steve thought.

“Nothing of your buissn-“ Steve was cut off again by another fit of coughing this time even harder that he thought will cry out in pain.

“Well I could have left you there princess. So do me a favour: stop the bullshit with me and start to talk, I’m getting old here!” The atmosphere was dense. Billy was glaring at him as if he was about to murder him. Steve now had no choice.

“Well I can’t spend money that I don’t have on the bus...” Steve said in a low voice. Billy now was looking at him as if he was searching for something. He was scanning Steve. After a moment of silence he said.

“Well obviously a stingy man don’t let himself starve like you”

“What do you mean ?”

“If you were just worried about money you would have at least spent them on food. While if you don’t have them you can’t spend anything. Rich people are not sickly skinny” He paused.

“How long have you been starving yourself ?” Steve couldn’t believe his ears: Billy fucking Hargrove was asking him about his health ?

“What are you talking about ?” Steve said not believing the surprised tone of his own voice.

“I remember you, pretty boy, from school. You weren’t this skinny, when I found you I was worried I had killed you. Looking for some serious wound I had to take your shirt off...”

Steve didn't know what to say now, Billy already known everything just by observing him. He himself couldn't stare at his own body in front of a mirror. He was just a mass of skin and bones.

"So how long ?" Billy was glaring at him, looking for the next lie.

"I ..." Steve tried.

"Don't try to say that it was this morning because you just vomited water." Steve couldn't match Billy now, he was so tired and everything in his body ached. He was quite sure that Billy knew that and was using the advantage to get more information.

"Yesterday" He said.

"How long did you had a proper meal ?" Now Billy was making it hard to said. Steve paused, he didn't even remember that in a long time, he had to think about it.

"Two weeks ago" He whispered. It wasn't his fault, but the rent had took away every single coin that he had saved for his car. His salary wouldn't come until the end of the month and there were still three weeks to go. He was desperate, he lived on the tips of the restaurant and bar, but that wasn't always much, lately he didn't had bigger tips than 50 c. if there was one at all. A lot of clients didn't give him anything.

Billy was looking at him, a bit surprised by their conversation.

"You could stay here for the night" Billy sat up and was about to exit the room when Steve couldn't take his mouth shut anymore.

"Why are you helping me ?" The question seemed to froze Billy. He rested immobile.

"Well it's a way to say sorry for almost getting you down with my car. And .... Also for beating up your face up at that house, some years ago" With this He exited the room, leaving behind a shocked Steve.

## 2. I'm just a Shadow

During the night, Steve woke up. Maybe was the hallucination from the previous high fever, maybe the concussion, but in the room he was sure to have seen a demodog, a big black and scary demodog. He didn't even think once before his weak and bruised body was launching at the door where Billy had disappeared an hour before. He was sweating cold and he could taste blood in his mouth. Beyond the door there was a fine kitchen with a big sofa in front of a on television. Billy was asleep on the sofa but hearing all the noises that Steve was making he started to wake up.

Steve was in panic. He needed his big old bag, where the fuck Hargrove had put it ? In every bag, Steve always carried the nailed bat. He took it everywhere, sometime even in the shower. He couldn't find it he was becoming crazy. Suddenly a hand grabbed his right arm, making him jolt with pain, the hand seemed on fire. Billy was shouting at him, but in Steve condition the words couldn't reach his ears. He was having a panic attack. Steve had a lot of them after the upside down, but never in front of someone. He usually just stayed curled up on the floor waiting the attack to pass, sometimes it occurred hours to calm down but with time pass these were less frequently.

Now he could feel his aching lungs because of his cough and laboured breath like he had ran a marathon. He could feel his ribs screaming for the effort he had just made, something warm was leaking from his nose, probably blood. And he was crying without even knowing, both for panic and pain. After some minutes he calmed down a bit, but then his body was shutting down, his legs gave up and he would have collapsed on himself if there wasn't for Billy's strong arms that caught him. Steve saw Billy face. He was worried and scared.

"Hey Harrington, talk to me!" Steve couldn't muster any energy, so Billy took him in the bedroom laying him down carefully. He took a thermometer and put it in his mouth. When he took it from Steve, he appalled it was 33°C, Steve was so cold and if he just had an hour ago an high fever this shouldn't be a good sign.

Steve had just the energy to whisper.

“I’m sorry”

“What are you sorry for ? I put you in this condition !” Billy said in a rush, looking as Steve passed out again. Now panic was taking control of Billy, he didn’t know what to do so did the only thing he could though: he took off his pyjama shirt and went to bed near Steve, in attempt to warm him up a bit. Steve was like ice and looked so pale and fragile. Now that Billy was seeing the boy from near he could see the scars that he left on his face. He saw the fresh blood that now was coming out of his nose. Wiping it away with a tissue he felt that even his blood was cold. Steve wasn’t looking really well, he had big dark circles under his eyes, sunken cheeks, messed up hairs and a really shallow breath.

They passed the rest of the night curled up together. Sometime Steve would be shaken by a fit of cough, but Billy could feel that the other boy’s temperature was slowly rising.

Finally Steve woke up at 10:00 am, he blinked a few times not really remembering what happened the previous night. Billy was the first to speak.

“You really scared the shit out of me this morning.... Anyway good morning sleeping princess !”

“Oh ... I’m sorry. Good morning Bil- Hargrove” Steve corrected himself before it was too late. They never acknowledge each other by the first name, it was too confident. Billy seemed to notice Steve’s error, but let it pass without comment on it.

“So... How are you feeling ?” It was obvious that Billy was embarrassed by the whole situation. Now that Steve was thinking of it, he felt like shit. Every bone in his body were giving him pain. His head was throbbing hard on his skull. His bruised ribs were killing him. He could feel like a bunch of needles sticking in his lungs and trachea at every breath. Steve was sure he was sick but didn’t wanted Billy to see it, he already seen too much.

“I’m feeling well !” He said with great effort to feel enthusiastic and



healthy. Billy raised an eyebrow.

“You nearly died from hypothermia, you nearly went under a car, you nearly cracked your head, you nearly broken your ribs and shoulder and you tell me that you feel well ? I’m sorry pretty boy, but I don’t believe you !”

Now Steve was getting angry. He knew well his precarious situation, but all he wanted to do was going home and sleep on his uncomfortable couch in his freezing apartment, waiting for Monday to come, dying a bit every hour. All he wanted was staying alone with just his aching body and his unquenchable hunger.

“Come on I’ll make breakfast!” Billy said getting up from the bed. He dressed up and exited the room, leaving the door wide open.

Steve was left alone with his mind. Luckily it was Saturday and he didn’t have to go to work. Slowly he raised his upper body. He needed to go to the bathroom, even just to wash his face and the horrible acid taste in his mouth. The moment he was on his feet he felt that his legs weren’t carrying him anywhere. Leaning on the wall he managed to reach the bathroom door, but when he shifted his weight on the doorway, it opened wide leaving Steve fall hard on the tiled floor.

He was still trying to get up helping himself with his weak arms when he heard Billy.

“Harrington ? Is that you ? What –“ He paused entering the bedroom not seeing Steve in the bed. So he went to the bathroom and didn’t liked what he saw. Steve was on the floor not able to get himself up, falling over and over when he raised his body. Billy was right away at his side, pulling him up by the shoulders.

“Steve ! Hey look at me ! Don’t do stupid things or you get yourself even worse than you already are” He had called him Steve ? Billy set him on the closed toilet and was facing him.

“Look at me. Don’t do things alone or you’ll get hurt. When you need something you call me.” Steve was red from the embarrassment, he didn’t know what to say.

“Come on let’s get you cleaned up !” Billy put under the sink water a towel, when it became soaked he handed it to Steve. During that time Steve caught a sight of himself in the mirror: he resembled a broken doll. He was covered in bandages with as his ill pale skin, near his ribs the bandages showed the blue big bruise that he had took from the car accident. It was scary that he could count every single bone in his chest, but that was normal now for him. His face was sunken and bruised, big dark circles under his eyes were highlighted by the bathroom white light. He seemed a cancer patient apart from his long brown messed up hairs.

“I’m sorry” He murmured.

“Not your fault pretty boy !” Billy actually smiled to him, Steve thought. The smile and his words seemed sincere.

After cleaning himself up, Billy practically carried him to the kitchen, set him on a chair and shove an enormous plate of pancakes.

“Eat or they will become cold” Billy said, while sitting right in front of Steve with an even bigger amount of food in the plate.

“Thanks !”

They started eating, but after the second pancake Steve started to feel his stomach turn over. He hadn’t have a normal meal in weeks and now that he had the opportunity to eat freely it turns out that he couldn’t stomach it. He didn’t want to disturb Billy that seemed famished, so he just put a little piece in his mouth and started to chew it slowly.

Billy was biting down his fifth pancake when noticed that Steve had stopped eating and was turning a sickly shade of green. The boy was obviously going to puke, but Billy didn’t understand why wasn’t he telling him that he didn’t feel well.

“You ok there ?” Billy tried.

“I think I have to go to the bathroom” Steve whispered.

Billy was immediately on his feet, carrying the other boy near the toilet. As soon as Steve was reclined on the porcelain, his body

started convulsing and every molecule of food he just ate was making his way out of his tired body. Billy watched as the poor boy emptied his stomach, unfortunately Steve retched more even when he hadn't left anything in.

After 20 minutes Steve finally stopped. Billy was massaging his back, a bit too shocked to feel and see all the other boy's bones. It was obvious to Billy that Steve had lost too many kilos and his body was rejecting the food because it wasn't used to it anymore. This fact was scaring Billy, living with his father for years had made him become careful to notice every single detail of another person, it was a way to know things before knowing the other.

"I'm so sorry Billy I didn't meant to disturb you in this way" He coughed, without noticing how he named the other man.

"I'll go home now so you can do your things in peace" Steve added.

"One: it's not your fault, two: You are not going anywhere, you are sicker that I thought"

Billy helped him to the bed laying him with a pillow on his back in order to make him upright.

"Now I'm going to give you a glass of juice and you will drink it slowly" Billy announced. Steve just nodded.

Billy returned to the sick boy with a glass in one hand. Steve took it with shaking hands. He drank it slowly as Billy had told him. He didn't understand why the other boy was being so nice to him, Steve was so messed up. His whole life had been messed up. Without noticing Steve was crying. He had denied his shitty reality for too long, lied to himself that he was okay, that things were going to become better soon, but after 5 years he was realizing how fucked up he was. He had refused the reality hiding behind a wall that now was collapsing burying him underneath it. He had done it because he didn't wanted to show himself so weak and fragile. Wha a smile can hide is dangerous. But with Billy was different, he didn't know Steve that much, however he could see beyond the wall that Steve had created during these years. This fact scared him a lot.

“Why are you crying ? Are you in pain ?” Billy asked with a concerned voice.

“No is just that ...” Another cough fit interrupted him. He wasn’t being honest with Billy: yes he was in pain, but there was no point to said it. In reality he was crying for the realization what his life had really been in the past years. Steve took all the courage he could muster and said:

“I’m sorry for being a problem, you are being so nice toward me and I don’t know how to thank you. I don’t know how to regard you for everything you are doing for me. I just don’t know what to do. I’m-I’m so tired of my life, nobody can see beyond the always ok Steve Harrington, they don’t know anything about me. But you ! You seem to see all my weakness without even knowing me ? How – How do you do that ? You left the city straight away after school finished. I thought I would never see you again. Why are you even here helping me out ? I thought you hated me” He said sobbing.

“Listen, calm down, living with my father I learned to observe even the smaller detail of people. You should learn to ask for help when you really need it. Also I can see things that your “friends” can’t because I saw you after so many years and the difference is really outstanding. Maybe others can’t see that you are in difficulty because you don’t let them see it. And I’m helping you out because I’m in debt with you for a lot of things and I’ve grown up and changed from what I was in high school”

They stayed silent until Steve had another coughing attack. At every cough his body was convulsing with pain for the spasms.

“How long have you been like this ? I mean this sick ?” Billy asked.

“Oh this ? It’s nothing really is just that I don’t have the heating at home so I suppose I have just took a bit of cold. It rains always and I got soaked pretty bad last week and ...” He was cut off.

“Wait ! this means that your car broke down before last week and you hadn’t repaired it yet ? How long does it take to the mechanic to repair it ? I started working there this week as soon as I moved here and I didn’t see any car that needed repair this week” Billy said.

“Well that’s because I can’t really afford right now the bill of the mechanic... in fact I picked up a second job at the bar to save money for it but it’s not going well” Steve had to admit.

“When did it broke down ?” Asked Billy.

“Mmm ... like three weeks ago now”

Billy was glaring at him as if he had grown two heads.

“Ok ... you will stay here at least till you feeling better, no argue about that. After we’ll figure something out. Now you can rest and when you feel up to, just call and I can make you a sandwich if you think you can stomach it”

“Maybe it’s better if I’ll go home, I think I’ve already done enough damage here”

“No arguing about this ! We’ll talk later”

“But why helping me out so much ? I don’t understand it ?”

“Well I just moved here and started my new job as a mechanic this week. In town I don’t know anybody apart from few shitty people from school, that I would prefer not to meet again. So I figured out that making a friend now would have been hard. The fate made you go down my car so I think I’m helping you so one day if I had some problems I could rely on someone”

“Oh yeah sure ! If you need anything ...”

“I think I’ll wait to ask you anything, pretty boy. Now rest I’ll go to the market for 1 hour at most. Don’t you dare to get out of this bed or I’ll kick your ass princess !” With that Billy was gone.

As if a magic spell was set, Steve was falling in a deep sleep, with strange dreams.

### 3. Billy's Patience

He woke up by a shaking warm hand. Slowly blinking and trying to remember where he was. He was greeted by a shining smile.

“Hey princess, it’s 1.00pm do you feel up to a warm soup ?”

“Oh yeah it’s fine”

“Can you walk by yourself ?”

Steve didn’t think he could do it, but instead he just nodded. He slowly got up and made five step with Billy glaring at him as a guard dog. After the fifth step he was panting hard and would have fell down if Hargrove hadn’t caught him.

“Careful pretty boy or you will hurt yourself more”

Billy took him to the table and poured some soup in a small plate. Now Steve could see that Billy’s house was much more better than his. First of all it was heated, well illuminated and bigger than his. Probably Billy had already had a job before because he could have an house like that. Taking a spoon of the soup he shoved it in his mouth waiting for shallowing it, not wanting to end up like before. Billy was in front of him eating a big plate of pasta, he had his mouth dirty with tomato sauce.

“So how long have you lived here ?” Billy asked.

“This last two years, my father kicked me out of home because I disobeyed him !”

“What the hell did you do to piss him off that much ?”

“I said that I wanted became a policeman when my parents insisted on economy college. So when I made it clear, they cut all the relationships with me and disinherited me. I had to go out of school because taxations were too much for me so I came back here to set myself in a better condition, but... it’s not going well”

“I’m sorry for all the shit you had to cope with”

“Not your fault man. What about you ?” Steve inquired.

“Well after school I moved in California to a friend of mine. I went to a mechanic that kind of formed me for this kind of work. Unfortunately there wasn't work for me there so I remembered that here there was just an old man who repaired cars so I came here instead and I found that the same old man was searching for some help and he took me in after this week of testing” Steve thought strange the fact that Billy couldn't find a work as a mechanic in Cali, there were so many people there and richer than people in Hawkins, with bigger and better cars, he would have found more work there instead of here, but he leaved it be.

“Oh I'm happy to hear that old Sam finally decided to have the required help ! And I'm happy to hear that you found a good job so easily !” Steve said.

“Yes I was a very lucky man !”

“So how do you feel now ?” Billy asked as if was expecting another lie.

Steve didn't know how to answer to that, he was better, but what was concerning him were his ribs. They were hurting so bad, he couldn't lean against the chair back. It was hurting staying up right and just breath.

“Well I feel fine just the cough, but for the rest it's ok !” Strangely Billy seemed to believe his half lie, maybe because it was an half a truth.

They started talking about California's beach and the fact that Billy was a surfer. They laughed like two old friends that known each other since ever. After lunch they sat on the sofa and started watching a film that was on the television. Steve had some problems watching it because of the frequent coughing that was never leaving him. When it was hard, Billy looked at him with concerning eyes, but Steve would tell him that it was nothing. His cough wasn't really getting better, however he didn't wanted Billy to have others problems so he tried his best to keep quiet as much as he could holding his breath. Sometimes it was like he was convulsing and it

was increasing his pain in the ribs. At the end of the film Steve was exhausted from pain, yes an extended pain can suck out every energy you have and Steve didn't have much energy in his sick body.

"Hey why don't we go for a walk ?" Billy asked while looking outside the window. The sky had just a few clouds and it didn't seem inclined to rain any time soon. Steve didn't have any energy to walk, but he knew that if he told Billy he couldn't quite go out, he would have stayed too and it wasn't fair ! Steve didn't wanted to make the other boy give up on his plans just because of him. So the only thing that he could do was lying.

"Yes that's a great idea !" Steve smiled, at least his smile was sincere.

Billy gave him some of his clothes because Steve's were still drying in the bathroom. It was obvious that they weren't his size because the pants were falling out even with the belt. When Steve emerged from the bedroom wearing Billy's clothes the owner laughed so hard.

"Oh my God Princess! You seem a schooler boy who is wearing his father clothes for fun!" Billy laughed.

"Ah ah ah really funny!" Steve said with a pissed tone, knowing that probably he was ridiculous.

"So let's go!" Billy said.

When the door opened a cold breeze blew to Steve face. Outside was even colder that he remembered. Maybe lying to Billy hadn't been a clever idea. He just hoped the walk wouldn't be too long.

Billy inhabited near a park that now was painted with beautiful colours of the Autumn leaves. They went there, walking on a wet floor of multicolour leaves. For a moment Steve was feeling a genuine happiness that he didn't felt in a long time, he was young, free, healthy for a moment. He was so happy that he started to run as the wind made fall new leaves to add at the carpet. But his bruised ribs reminded him soon enough what's was the reality. For the pain that he was feeling, he had to lean to a tree to prevent himself of falling over. He almost choked on himself for the sharpness of the pain. Billy seeing that he was bending on himself was reaching him. Steve didn't



wanted to make the other worry more than he already did so he straightened up as if he was fine, coughing a bit for the effort.

“You ok ?” Billy asked.

“Yeah this place is really beautiful ! You have a nice place to go near home, it must be awesome !”

“Yes even if I never came here before because I hadn’t time... the first week of work was hard because I needed to be tested, but the boss employed me in the end so I’m happy!”

“Well now you have the job you always wanted and maybe when you have enough money you could go back to California” Steve noticed that his own tone was sad. Maybe he was becoming attached to Billy after all.

“Oh so you want me to go already ?” Billy joked.

“Well when you first came here you couldn’t shut up from saying that this town was all shit and that you missed California so much! “ Steve admitted.

“Oh so you actually where listening to me !” Billy laughed.

“Even the walls of the school know that Billy” Steve joked.

They both laughed at that, even if laughing was making a throbbing pain in Steve’s ribs that he could have cried out.

After some time Steve was growing tired, he was panting for the strain he was putting his body into. He was breathing like he had run all the time. And to make the whole situation the cough was becoming more aggressive at every fit.

Billy was telling him about the work he had to do on this car of his client in California, when Steve had a very hard cough attack. He had to stop walking and now was bending down with one hand on his mouth and the other on his ribs that were throbbing so much. Billy failed to notice immediately what was happening, he was talking so he continued walking because Steve had a lot of coughing fits. But now was different Steve could feel it, there was something in the

back of his throat that was coming out like a bunch of needles. He was on his knees before knowing it, coughing so hard that his whole body convulsed for every blow. He couldn't see Billy anywhere, he thought he had left him alone, grown tired of his sickness. After he felt a big hand on his back, no he didn't left him alone. The cough seemed to stop for a bit but Steve didn't have even the time to turn around and face Billy when it all started again, harder and with more pain. Now something sticky and wet came out of his mouth and suddenly Billy's hand had stopped on his back. He had squeezed his eyes so couldn't see what the sliming thing was. He continued to cough for some minutes always feeling the strange liquid come out of his mouth. When the attack finally cessed, Steve opened his eyes. He was shocked of what he saw: his hands, the floor near him were all covered in blood. He was starting to shake bad and hyperventilating, when two big hands where taking his wrists. Billy was glaring at him, fear all over his face.

"Let's go home" he said in a whisper.

Steve couldn't really get up, now he was beyond exhausted. Billy seemed to notice it and picked him up, lifting his upper body with one arm and his legs with the other. Steve looked dead, pale as a sheet and with blood dripping down his mouth. Billy was deadly serious, blood out of your mouth isn't a good sign. Now it seemed to him that Steve's weight was even lighter than when he had the car accident, probably adrenaline's fault.

Billy carried him in the house laying him on the bed. He now looked at him and said.

"I'll call an ambulance" Steve couldn't move, still when he understood what was meaning Billy, he tried to scream to him. He screamed, but it wasn't more than a normal tone of voice, however it was enough to have Billy's attention.

"Don't- don't do that- I don- don't have the-" He started to coughing more, but at least Billy seemed to stop from composing the hospital number.

"don't have the- the medi- medical insuran-ce" Steve managed to said. He hoped that Billy had understood him.

“You are saying that you don’t have the medical care ?” Billy asked.

“But your parents are so rich ... and you don’t have it ? You sure ?” Steve could only nod at that, his father had took everything away from him.

Now Billy was putting his hands in the hairs, looking at nothing at all. He was trying to figure out what to do. He couldn’t bring Steve at the hospital and his parent’s wouldn’t help his ex-son out. He looked up to Steve that was now coughing again. The only think he could think of was taking care of him in his house and trying to figure out why he was coughing out blood.

First he cleaned up Steve from the blood around his mouth, after he took off his clothes from the boy small frame and making him wear an old, but smaller long sleeves t-shirt of his. He covered Steve with warm wool blankets and put a wet cloth on his forehead feeling the increasing fever that was eating the boy away.

Billy didn’t even know why he was doing all this things for Steve. At high school he kind of hated him, but after moving in California, Max couldn’t shut up about what Steve Harrington had done, she looked up to him like he was a hero. She never told him that Steve was in so much trouble, so he just assumed Steve had kept it for himself. Probably not wanting to worry the bunch of kids he babysitted. He had known Steve by others talks, and had found out that they were quite similar, maybe he was helping him out because he could see himself in Steve when he was poor. Ok not that much poor but everybody told him that Steve, after Nancy, had become a selfless person and an hard worker. Steve didn’t deserved all this shit in his life, he was a good and kind person, as the kids always acknowledged him.

Now wasn’t the time to get sentimental. Steve was still coughing hard and he could see new blood on his hand. In an horizontal position Steve was choking on his own blood, so Billy had to took his upper body, turn it over and press a cloth on the mouth of the sick boy in order to take all the red liquid that was spilling out. It occurred several minutes to Steve to calm down a bit. Billy slowly turned him over and leaned Steve on the pillow.

Steve didn't know why he hadn't passed out, the pain was everywhere, he didn't know what happened and why it had happened. Last winter he had been sick for some time, but at the end nothing more than a hard cough and fevers, nothing his body couldn't take. Now the cards had changed, during the last four month his body had started to shut down. He had lost weight, and after his car broke down he had to take drastic decisions as using roller skate. All the supplementary activities had sucked out every energy he had left, leaving him always tired, sick since two weeks and desperate for help. Sadly he had already gone too far, if he had stopped before, now, he was sure, wouldn't be this bad. He just hoped Billy would let him stay there as long as he needed to stabilize and then he could go back to his shitty life and not see Billy again.

Billy stayed at his side for almost two hours, nursing him with so much patience. After he went in the kitchen, leaving the door open. Steve could smell that he was cooking something for dinner. He fell asleep.

## 4. Steve's apartment

He was woken by a gentle touch.

“Hey Steve, it’s time to eat something and take some medicine” Billy murmured.

“No please- please Billy, let-let m-me die” Steve complained, he was in so much pain.

"Take this medicine, it will helps you with the tuberculosis" Billy pressed first a pill then a glass of water on Steve lips. The other could just shallow.

"I don't have tuberculosis" Steve said coughing.

"Not so sure pretty boy" lied Billy. "But it's better if you take something... you know coughing out blood isn't a good sign, and just a few illness does this symptom"

"Ok, but I'll repay for that !"

"Don't worry I had it in my bathroom because a few years ago I didn't had the medical insurance too, and I sort of owned all kind of medicines, just in case you know"

Steve had never thought about the medical care till his father took it away from him. It was difficult to live without one. Now that he was thinking about it, Billy had never been too careful to take care of his fight wounds when he was at school, probably the other boy had never went to an hospital for that sort of things. Even because usually they were from his father.

Billy straighted up and started to lift him.

“Come on pretty boy, you need to eat something or you really die here” Billy voice was kind and firm. He took him on the sofa, putting another blanket around him.

“I know that you don’t want to eat but you really need it” Billy said putting a tray with a bowl of soup.

“Can you do it alone or I have to feed you ?” Billy half joked, but in reality he wasn’t sure that Steve could do anything right now.

Steve just took the spoon and made a first attempt. When he shallowed the warm liquid, it was like shallowing a knife. He didn’t expect it, he choked for the pain flinching at every breath. He felt tears running down his cheeks. He was so sick.

Billy was speaking to him, but Steve couldn’t really catch every single word.

“Did you hurt yourself ?” Billy tried again. Steve just shoot his head.

“Really ? So why are you crying ?” Billy inquired.

“It’s n-noth-thing” Steve managed.

“If it’s too hot and it hurts to shallow just wait for it to cool down a bit, after it won’t hurt so much”

Steve waited. At the end he ate it all, taking him almost an hour to finish. At every spoon he make a grimace for the pain shallowing was taking. Billy had always an eye on him, ready to intervene if he chocked again. Finally Billy took his bowl smiling a bit.

“Glad you ate it !” He paused.

“You tired or you want to see some television ?”

Steve was exhausted, but didn’t wanted to be left alone in the bedroom, the imaginary demodog was still clear in his memory and the thought of it made him scared. Probably Billy had seen his indecision because he asked next.

“Or you can stay here and when you fell fall asleep I can bring you to the bed” Steve just nodded.

Billy sat near Steve, and when he started to bend and straighten himself for his throbbing ribs, Billy said:

“If you need you can rely on me” It was the most generous things anyone had ever said to him in a long time. Steve put his pounding

head on Billy's shoulder, and he fell asleep within minutes.

During the night he woke up many times to cough up some blood, Billy was always there to help him out. He was always near him, sleeping in the other half of the bed, keeping the hot temperature that Steve so much needed.

The morning came in a few hours. Billy wasn't in the bed with Steve, he could hear him talking on the phone to someone. He tried to catch what he was saying.

"No I'm not family, I'm a friend. No he just got pretty sick. Really ? How – How long ? Oh he didn't told me about that. I'm just calling for saying that he won't be at work on Monday. Fired ? But he just need a week I don't understand. " Steve froze at what he was hearing. He rushed out of bed and in the kitchen where Billy was standing. Taking the phone out of his hand, leaving a shocked Billy, he cleared his throat.

"Mr Stank, it's Steve, I'm sorry for my friend he is just a good friend and was worried about me. I-I will be at work on Monday"

"Oh Steve here you are, I expect the best behaviour from my employers. If you don't need this job you can go somewhere else." Mr Stank, the owner of the restaurant, said in a serious tone.

"No sir there won't be any problems" Steve said leaning on the table.

"Good, see you on Monday !" Mr Stank said.

"Good bye Sir" Steve said hearing Mr Stank hang up the phone.

Billy was glaring at him. Steve had to sit down because he was about to collapse.

"How you can pretend to go to work when you can't even stand on your own ?" Billy asked.

"I can do it, I'm feeling better already" Steve said.

"Why don't take some days off ?"

"I can't Billy ! I fucking can't or they'll fire me! And after I lost my jobs I won't be able to survive anymore" Steve shouted to Billy sobbing a bit for the bitterness of his words.

"Did you called also the High Bar ?" Steve asked in tears.

"No I would have done it after the restaurant" Billy confessed.

They stayed silent for a long time, Steve looking his bare feet all scratched up because all the hours wearing the roller skates, until Billy spoke again.

"Why don't you come stay with me ?" Steve raised his head to see his face, Billy was being serious.

"I mean this house is pretty big and heated, nearer where you work. Also I can take you to the restaurant and pick you up at the bar with my car. You can stay here and we can share the expenses of the house" Steve was watching Billy, both boys red faced for the embarrassment.

"T-thank you but..." Steve tried.

"Steve, think about it ! This is serious! You can't go on like that, you don't seem to notice that your conditions is already serious. Look at yourself ! Look the state you reduced your body. Please put aside your selfless and let me help you. If you go back to that apartment you will die without doubt, and nobody will notice only when it will be too late"

Steve was without words, what Billy had said to him he already knew it, but he just denied it instead of coping with it. It was easier.

"Come on Steve let me help you !" Billy said kneeling in front of Steve and taking his hands in his.

Steve thought about it for some minutes. At the end he responded looking the other in the eyes.

"O-ok thank y-you" He sobbed. Billy hugged him letting him cry and give vent to the tears he hadn't let fall in a long time.

"Come on I'll make some breakfast, after it we will go fetch your stuff



at your apartment so you have your things here” Billy said.

“Ok” Steve smiled and Billy smiled too.

They ate pancakes, Billy something like eight and Steve only one, but at least he knew that he wouldn’t had to worry about rejecting it. Steve took again his medicine for the tuberculosis, which luckily seemed to have calmed down his cough a bit. Well at least he wasn’t throwing up blood.

They put on the jacket, Steve could finally wear his clothes that were dry now, with a big warm scarf that Billy made him wear. Billy’s camaro was clean and seemed new, he knew how to repair a car.

It took them 15 minutes to arrive at Steve flat. The building was falling apart, it was obvious that the people that lived there were really poor. Steve made the way up the stairs till the eighth floor, stopping sometime to take his breath and cough a bit, luckily no blood came out. When the door was opened, Billy was taken aback. His home was cold with a grey mould on a wall near the window, probably an infiltration of rain. It all consisted in two rooms: the bathroom and the living room/kitchen/bedroom. There was no television just a little radio near the sink. The small kitchen was untouched and without a table or chairs, right in front of the entrance there was an old brown couch with two blankets on it, probably Steve used to sleep there because there wasn’t a bedroom. Right behind the couch a little dresser with just two drawers instead of three, on top of it a photograph of Steve and the kids, there was also Max. Steve was grinning wide with eyes shut. He seemed so happy, but Billy could see dark circles under the boy’s eyes and an hint of his cheekbone; slim arms were around Will Byers and another boy, probably Dustin Henderson. When they took the photo Steve was already sick, Billy thought. Why hadn’t they, his friends, noticed ?

Now Steve was taking a few cloths from a drawer and putting them in his bag. Then he passed in the bathroom to pick up what he had in the cupboard and a towel. There wasn’t much more in the place, it was all so bare. The thought of living there for two years disgusted Billy. How had Steve managed to live for that long there ?

"I finished" Steve announced with the photograph in his hand.

"You sure you took everything ? I don't want to come back here, this place is horrible !"

"Ah ah yeah it really is !" Steve agreed.

They slowly descended the stairs, half way Steve started staggering so Billy knowing that stairs weren't really easy if you were sick and weak, he took Steve arm around his shoulder. Strangely the boy didn't push him away, it was like a conquest for Billy.

At the exit Billy saw the old BMW, you could have notice how used it had been in these years.

"Is that your car ?"

"Yeah I tried to fix it but it's out of my competences... probably I should scrap it one day"

Billy jut watched how sad Steve seemed while looking to his car, he was sure it had been like an home for him now. Billy wanted to make Steve smile, he couldn't stand seeing that sad smile on his face. He decided that he would have done something, he didn't knew what precisely, but surely something that would have make Steve smile.

They went back home with Elvis Presley on the radio.

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

Hope you liked it ! I already wrote till the 9 chapter, but I need time to end it ! I promise I'll keep uploading the next ones ! Thank you for everything !

## 5. Chapter 5

After the incursion at Steve house, Billy ordered some pizza while the sick boy crashed on the sofa, too tired to undo his bag full of all his things. Steve didn't own much, he always wore the work uniform apart from the weekend where he usually had jeans, a big heavy hoody to keep himself warm.

Finally a bit restored he picked up the bag and started to took out his things putting them in a space of the closet where Billy had told him to.

He was tidying his last t-shirt, when Billy shouted.

"What the fuck is that ?!?!?" Steve jolted up for the fear, regretting that action when his ribs sent a shot of pain, that he nearly screamed. He put both hands on the right side to stop the throbbing. Steve didn't know what he was referring to, he immediately turned toward the corner of the room where just the night before he had seen the demodog. To his surprise there was nothing there, so he turned to see where Billy was looking. The man was pointing to Steve's bag, where the nailed bat was laying.

"Is that what I think it is ?!?" Billy sounded scared.

"Oh it's my bat ... and yes I think is the same you remember.... from you know ... that night" Steve hadn't planned to show it to Billy this soon and in this way, but it happens.

"When did you took it from the apartment ?"

"Well it was already in my bag..."

"Wait, you carry around a nailed bat even to work ?" Billy was looking at him with shock all over his face.

"Yes ?"

"Why ?"

"it's kind of complicated ..." Steve admitted.

“We have all the time you need pretty boy !” Billy wanted to know Steve deepest secrets. All Steve could do to protect himself and Billy from thinking that he was crazy.

“Well if somebody try to steal my bag I... well I can use it ...” Really Steve ? He thought by himself. Can’t you thought about anything better to said ?

“You know that it’s a lie. How can you use it if that thing is in the bag, but the bag is already in the thief’s hands ?” Billy was challenging him again, and again he would win.

“Ok ok ! I understood, I use it in case if there were something that needed to be killed and ...”

“And .....?” Billy asked raising a brow.

“And when I have panic attacks” It felt wrong how it came out of his mouth.

Billy was looking at him, then he suddenly laughed out loud. He didn’t believed Steve, how could have Steve thought that he could finally share his deepest fears to someone like Billy Hargrove ? He was alone with his fears, he should have learned long time ago that nobody wanted his shit.

“Something that need to be killed and when you have panic attacks ? Harrington you really have imagination ! Even my sister told me something about you and a bat, fighting monsters from an another dimension, but I thought she was just kidding me”

Steve was sad and in pain, he had moved too fast probably damaging further his ribs. He felt it, now it was worse: at every breath the pressure of the lung was making gush new pain. To make the rough sensation go away he stuck his nails in the palm. He could feel the skin cutting under his fingers; it was painful, but the ribs were more. Billy stared at him, seeing that he was holding his side.

“Does it hurt ?” He asked. Steve was about to answer when the doorbell rang. Billy didn’t wait for his response and left Steve alone with the excuse of the ringing bell.

Steve went to the bathroom closing himself in, he needed to take the bandage off his torso, it was killing him. Raising his big hoody made him nauseated, every movement upper his shoulders would hurt as fuck and make his head unfocused, before there was Billy that had helped him out with the dressing task, but now he was alone. There was a pair of scissors on the sink, he took it and started to cut away the gauze. When he finished, if he had been alone in his apartment, he would have screamed. His ribs were prominent on the outside, there were some not big cuts that had reopened and now were bleeding, probably he had ripped them off before. All his right side was blue and violet, swollen and even touching it felt wrong. A wave of nausea made him sit on the toilet, at least the gauze wasn't constricting his laboured breath anymore.

"Steve ! Lunch is served" Billy was saying from the kitchen.

Steve couldn't really walk in that moment, so he just shouted to Billy back.

"I'm coming!"

Carefully he lifted himself and opened the bathroom door. He leaned on the wall to catch his breath, trying not to pass out. He went straight for his chair using the table to sit down slowly, maybe too slowly. Billy was eyeing him with suspicion.

"You are white as a sheet, you ok ?" He asked.

"Yeah I'm-" A cough fit, that he was half expecting, cut him off. Holding his pained ribs he coughed a lot. In some ways he regained control over the pain and looked at Billy.

"I'm fine" He added.

They ate in silence with only some coughing from Steve, but nothing serious. His stomach was better so he could eat a quarter of pizza before giving up. Billy seemed almost happy to finish what Steve had left, after his own pizza.

"So you are going to work tomorrow ?" Billy said not looking at him.

"Yes I start at 8'o clock" That early ? Billy thought. So this was

meaning that Steve had only slept about four hours per day in the last weeks ? How he made it this far ?

“You sure you can handle it ?”

“Yeah of course I won’t have problems”

“Fine. But now help me clear the table princess!”

“Sure”

He did his best to hide his injured ribs, and it was working.

They stayed indoor that afternoon, chatting, watching the news and so on.

They slept together, Billy argued with Steve that if something happened he couldn’t notice it in another room! The sick boy really was extremely embarrassed to stay that way with him. It had happened before, but it was because he needed someone nursing him, now was different. Now he found himself thinking about him and Steve.

## 6. Chapter 6

Their rest stopped when the alarm started. Steve opened his eyes and tried to move in the bed. His right side was hurting, but he knew what he could hold. Billy was still turning in the sheets, trying to regain sleep. He slowly got up and directed toward the bathroom. His reflex in the mirror wasn't really good, but after that weekend he couldn't expect more. He took out the bandage around his head, on his right temple there was a deep cut with dark red clotted blood. All around it the skin was livid, bruised and blue. He sighed and put his uniform on, the one of the bar in his bag and was about to exit when Billy still in pyjama, scolded him.

"Steve Harrington ! Where are you going ?"

"Mmm at work ?" Steve tried.

"Without eating Breakfast ?"

"It's early and I need to go"

"You will eat your breakfast, as you said it's early and the restaurant is just a block away from here. We have time"

Billy was being a strict mother to him, but Steve was grateful there was someone to take care of him. He always lived alone even with his parents. They were always abroad, didn't bother to call him sometime, to hear their only son's voice. Steve barely knew them. Steve took his medicine, he wasn't sure that it made some effect but he hadn't cough up blood anymore, so maybe it was helping him a bit.

Steve had to wait for Billy to dress up because he said that he intended to bring him with the car, in fact the mechanic's Office was in that direction.

Finally arrived at the restaurant entrance, Steve was about to step out of the car when Billy caught his wrist.

"You call me if something happens !"

“Oh y-yeah, ok”

“No really you call me and I’ll come straight away !”

“Sure”

“Oh wait ! Take this !” Billy handed him a brown package.

“What’s this ?”

“It’s your lunch pretty boy, be sure to eat it ! Or I’ll kick your ass ! See you later” Billy said.

When the Camaro disappeared, Steve felt alone, vulnerable and not willing to enter the door gate of the restaurant. He opened the package, inside there was a sandwich, probably Billy had made it in the evening before while Steve was sleeping. Finally he stepped inside. He changed his shoes with the roller skates, and now his long day could start.

For all the time he tried to smile despite his hurt ribs. Every movement was a struggle, even because sometime he had coughing fits, not hard as the previous attacks. Today there was a lot of people for breakfast, so the service should have been fast and coordinated. Steve had four tables and he had already served all the clients, the wife of Mr Stank was serving at the counter and their daughter was serving three tables like Steve.

Steve didn’t liked that family because they were stingy as hell ! Mrs Stank always flirted with every man that entered the restaurant. Her husband, Mr Stank, was the director and was always counting even the cents of his business, he always took away something from Steve’s salary with any excuse he could imagine. Their daughter Tess was a stupid girl that looked just at rich guys.

At lunch a lot of school boys came from the near school where Steve had gone, there was so much work to do, there were more clients that ordered a lot of junk food because they were young and there was just one salad on the menu. Tess wasn’t helping him, too occupied on flirting with a boy that seemed interested on a night with a slut like her. After serving a table of girls, a group entered.



Steve directed to them immediately, they were his grown up kids !

“Hey shitheads ! Do you need a table ?” The kids came any time the school canteen was serving something that seemed to come from the upside down.

“Steve !!” They all shouted, but their happiness ended as soon as they looked at him. Steve was looking awful, pale, with a big bruise and cut on his temple that stood out from his white skin. Dustin was the first to ask.

“What happened to you ? Look at your face ! Did you go into a fight ?” They were all staring at him, he felt uncomfortable.

“Oh I fell with these things again !” Steve lied pointing at the roller skates.

“You sure you ok ?” Asked Will.

“Yeah, what can I get you ?” He kindly asked while showing them a free table.

“Oh the same !” They all said.

When their orders were ready he went to serve them.

“Steve ?” Max was looking at him.

“Yes Max, What is it ?”

“Your bruises have nothing to do with the return of Billy ?” At the words return of Billy Dustin split his coke, Lucas paled looking terrified, Mike and Will remained with an open mouth. Jane was looking at all of them probably asking herself: who was Billy ?

“He came back ???” Lucas asked.

“He came to finish what he had started years ago with Steve !” Dustin shouted out that an old couple turned in their direction.

“Should we call Hopper ?” Will asked with trembling voice.

“Guys ! Guys ! Stop it, don’t be stupid ! Billy came here for working ! He changed, he is a better brother now, and a better person !” Max said with angry voice.

“And what kind of work do he do now ? The mafia boss ?” Asked Dustin.

“The killer would suit him better!” Answered Lukas.

“Hey hey hey ! Stop it ! You are being immature !” Steve intervened before it was too late.

“If Max said that he had changed and he is a better person now, believe her !” Steve looked at all them with disapproving eyes.

“You shouldn’t judge people like this ! He went through a lot of shit you can’t understand, Max knows it !” Max was looking at him with admiration in the eyes.

“Thanks Steve !” She said.

“Now apologise to her !” He said. Everybody did as told.

After the conversation Steve felt exhausted, these kids were going to be the death of him. He couldn’t take a break because there still were many tables to serve and clean after. He caught his mind shifting on Billy. What was he doing now ? How was he? Was he having lunch break ? Steve just looked forward to the end of the day, even if he known that at

the bar it would have been hard, in reality he wanted to quit that job, but in order to do that he needed to talk with the manager.

Lunch passed and after cleaning and preparing everything for the dinner he could finally eat his sandwich.

“Steve ! Come to the kitchen there is some cleaning for you !” Mr Johnson, the cook shouted. Steve passed the afternoon in the kitchen sweeping the pavement, at least he hadn’t to wear the roller skates !

At dinner there were just a few people, most old men that came every evening.

At 9:30pm Steve finished his turn. Thinking about Billy he asked if could use the restaurant phone because he didn't owned one.

"Hallo ?" His masculine voice came from the receiver.

"Hi Billy, It's Steve"

"Oh what's up pretty boy ?"

"Oh I was just calling for saying that I finished here and now I'm going to the bar to say that I don't need that work anymore, I think the others waiters can manage without me for some days until they find someone else." He coughed a bit.

"Oh perfect, I'll pick you up there. Are you ok ? You sound terrible !"

"Oh no I'm-I'm fine it's just the phone !"

"Mmm if you say so, anyway don't catch a cold, outside is raining hard again !" Billy said. Steve hadn't notice the storm that had arrived on the town.

"Oh yeah sure ! See you later"

"Later" Steve hang up, collected his jacket and his bag, Billy's scarf and sighing he exited.

Outside was cold, Steve had just to walk past three blocks, but after the first he was drenched. He hadn't an umbrella.

At the bar he asked to see the director, a big woman, probably one of the barman of turn before him, told him to wait where he was probably because under his shoes there was forming a puddle from all the rain he took.

Mr Carson came, he eyed Steve as if he had never seen him before.

"So Harrington, what do you want to ask me ?"

"Well I don't need this work anymore"

"Oh that surprise me, When you first came here you were almost

begging me, what changed ?”

“Well my- my situation has improved from that time”

“You don’t seem in a better shape to me”

“I’m still recovering”

“You sure about this ?”

“Yes sir”

“Ok I accept this, but ...” He sighed.

“Try to take better care of yourself !” Showing the state Steve was in.

“Thanks Mr Carson !”

“And remember that there will be always a place here for you !” Steve himself, was a bit shocked; Mr Carson was always serious and seemed a lonely man, in fact he wasn’t married. Now he was showing his big heart to Steve !

“Thank you very much” With that Steve exited the bar and waited outside for Billy to come.

He started shivering and coughing hard, even shiver was hurting his ribs. He didn’t felt really good. Suddenly a car engine was audible on top of the pouring of the rain. Billy stopped right in front of Steve, while he was having a cough fit. He went out of the car.

“Steve ! You are soaked ! I thought you had an umbrella !”

“I...” He was cut off by the cough.

“Come on get inside !”

Steve climbed in the passenger seat, and they went home.

## 7. Chapter 7

Billy was eyeing him as he shivered hard. Billy opened the front door. "Go change your clothes or you will catch a cold !"

Steve staggered to the bathroom starting to feel dizzy. The room started to spin all around, he took hold of the sink. He was still weak so his grip didn't lasted long, he went down like a broken doll, but he protected his already pained ribs with his other arm. Billy hearing the noise, went immediately inside.

"Steve !! What happened ?" Billy lifted him up.

"Just... felt d-dizzy" Ha admitted.

"You want to rest ? Should I put you in bed ?"

"No ... no it-it's al-already passing" He said as Billy helped him took off his wet clothes.

"Steve ! Oh my God ! Your ribs ! You took off your torso bandage ? You shouldn't have done that you could hurt your ribs even more ! When did you did it ?" Oh crap ! Steve thought.

"Yes-yesterday, it was... hurting s- ... much"

Billy lifted completely Steve's shirt, showing his bare skinny, blue and bruised chest. He just brushed his fingers against his right side. Steve let out a pained whisper, not expecting it.

"It hurt this much ?" He said in a worried voice. Steve just nodded.

"Mmm I think that you might have some cracked ribs... this is not good Steve you shouldn't move in this state !"

"I-I c-can't" With that Billy just took him to the bed, he took off his black trousers and covered him with the blankets.

"I'm sorry... I think I did this mess when we had the car accident"

"I-it wasn't y-your ... f-f-fault"

"Do you feel up to something to eat ?"

"I... I don't k-know"

"I take it as a yes ! You should eat more or you will become sicker ! I'll go cook something, now you rest"

Billy came back with two plate of pasta, one much bigger than the other; he carefully lifted Steve's torso up putting a pillow under to make the boy upright. When Steve felt the movement, he gripped his hands on Billy biceps squeezing hard for the pain he was going to feel. Billy let him do, it seemed almost that he liked to take care of Steve with a bit of touching.

"Come on after this you can sleep !" Billy smiled to him while sitting

in a chair near Steve part of the bed.

Steve manage to eat three quarters of the plate, he couldn't go on so Billy just added the food in his already full and big plate.

"Almost, pretty boy ! Next time try harder !" He joked.

Steve laughed a bit, but it soon turned in a cough. Even laughing was painful.

"Now you can rest !" With that Billy exited the room, switched the light off and wished Steve a good night. Steve didn't felt Billy came in the bed he was so tired that when the door closed he drifted in a coma state like.

When he woke up, the man was at his side, snorting loudly; as Steve started to move, he practically climbed out of the bed running toward Steve side.

"What are you doing ? Don't you know that you could aggravate your cracked ribs by doing suck things ?"

"Good morning to you too Billy ! No I didn't know that !" Steve said in a sarcastic tone.

"Well at least you have the energy to stand up to me !" Billy said not really convinced. He lifted the other and directed in the kitchen. Steve went in the bathroom and looked at his reflex on the mirror: he was already better, still pale though, but better in any way. He was just curious so he took off his pyjama, the colour of his side hadn't improved, it was still blue and hid ribs stood out as much as yesterday. Probably he had to wait a bit more for them to sane.

In the kitchen Billy had already set the table, he was already dressed up with a mechanic blue suit. He was finishing to heat up some eggo's, putting them in front of Steve with a bottle of maple syrup.

"Today you should be careful with them !" Billy started, but Steve didn't know what was he referring to.

"Or you could set them in a bad position and puncture your lung !"

"Oh the ribs ! Yeah sure, don't worry !" He paused.

"Yesterday I saw Max and the kids" Billy stopped eating and didn't dare to look at him.

"Oh... they are – they are still afraid of me ?" He murmured.

"Well... all of them apart from Jane and Max of course, but don't

worry they will change their minds soon.”

“Who is Jane ?”

“Chief Hopper adopted daughter !” Billy just nodded.

“Did – did Max said anything about me ?”

“She told them that you have changed and now you are a good brother and a better person !” Now Billy looked at him.

“She said it with so much proud in her voice Billy ! You should have been there, she really cares about you !” Billy smiled after that, Steve could tell that he was happy.

They exited in the cold morning of an Autumn day, there was a with light and big grey clouds that were more for snow days.

“Alright princess ! Get in the car !”

“Can you stop calling me like that ?”

“What ? Princess ? You don’t like it, princess ?” Billy asked with a smirk.

“No I don’t like it !”

“Oh well ! I was so sure you liked it princess, I promise you I will only use ...”

“What ?”

“Pretty boy, of course princess !” Billy laughed. Steve laughed too, sadly it turned again in a cough attack. Billy looked at him with concerned eyes.

Billy leaved Steve at the entrance of the restaurant, not before giving him his lunch. Steve blushed, he promised to himself that he would have cooked dinner that evening, it was a way to say thank you to Billy and all the things that he was doing for him.

## 8. Chapter 8

The day went as usual. The kids didn't come at lunch, probably there were something good at school because there were no students. It was a luck for Steve because it meant less work, and with his aching ribs was like a blessing. In the afternoon he was cleaning the pavement right in front of the entrance, when a person came in. Steve immediately looked up to greet and serve the new client. He was surprised to see Max standing right in front of him.

"Oh Max ! Hi, H-how are you ?"

"I need to talk with you" She said in a really serious voice. He obviously immediately thought about the fact that he was staying at Billy's and that she wanted to say to leave her brother in peace. They seated in a table.

"I need a big favour !" She piped out.

"What is it Max ?" Asked Steve with a bit of apprehension that was starting to build up in the back of his head.

"Well you were protecting Billy yesterday, saying that wasn't his fault about the fight..."

"Yeah ..."

"Do you really believe that " She asked him with bright eyes.

"Of course I believe that or otherwise I wouldn't have said that, I know what you have been through for just a few years, but he had to cope with a violent father even when he was a little child, and losing his mother must have been the breakpoint of it all" Steve simply said.

"Ok I think I can trust you !" She paused.

"I wanted to ask you if you could hang out a bit with my brother..." Steve had thought about something really different from this, but this meant that she didn't already know about his new born friendship with Billy. He was about to answer when she cut him off.



“He don’t know anybody here, I want him to have true relationships, if he is alone I’m afraid that he would go back to his bad issues and have bad models. I think you two could become good friends ! You are so similar, but you just never noticed !” He was going to answer but she cut him off again.

“Please Steve ! I really need you for this ! Please ! I beg you”

“I would do that ! Don’t worry I won’t leave Billy alone !” Steve said, remembering just after that he had called him Billy ! Luckily Max seemed not really aware about the words that followed I would do that because she screamed and got up from her seat to hug Steve. Steve didn’t expected that because suddenly he was so much in pain. The ribs ! He though. Max was tighten his torso so hard that a pained sound escaped from his mouth. She seemed to notice this because she suddenly pulled away frowning at him.

“Are you hurt ?”

“What ? No, why would I be ? Now I really have to go back to work” He said nodding towards Mrs Stank, that was looking at them from the counter with a annoyed and suspicious look.

“Mmm Ok.... Thanks Steve you are the best ! See you” She said running past the door.

“Bye !”

He stood slowly supporting himself on the table. He knew he had to go back to work soon or he will be in trouble and Mr Stank would cut some money off his salary. Steve embed his nails in his palm for the pain. His work after that hug was really difficult for him more because he couldn’t get rid of the hurtful sensation in his side.

Around 7:00pm started to arrive the clients. He was exhausted and probably it was showing because in a table an old lady asked him if he was feeling all right. From that moment he started to notice a good amount of looks in his direction especially as he moved around. Steve didn’t thought that he was acting strange or tired, he just didn’t understand why the others were all looking at him like he had grown tow heads ! As he was serving the same old lady that was concerned about him, his husband asked Steve to speak with the manager of the

restaurant. Steve just paled because nobody had ever asked something like that before, he was scared that they were going to complain about his way of serving or maybe how he nearly dropped the soup for the Mrs. When he approached the counter Mr Stank that was filling a can of beer for a trucker, he didn't know how to say it. When he finally had the courage his boss was looking at him with murderous eyes.

"What the fuck did you do this time ?" He asked angrily, walking towards Steve that was showing the way to the table.

When they arrived the old lady got up and approached Mr Stank.

"What's the problem madam ? Did he (nodding toward Steve) do something wrong ? I will take immediately measures" She frowned at this.

"No, no actually I was going to ask why is he working in this state ?" Steve couldn't believe at his hears. Mr Stank looked to the old lady to Steve eying him as if he saw his employer for the first time.

"He is obviously sick ! How can you put to work a person that can hardly stand on his own !" Now a lot of people were listening to their conversation all watching Steve that was shifting on his roller skate. The restaurant fell in absolute silence. He felt uncomfortable, he just wanted to go home or even go back to work and never ever have this much attentions, it was all too much to bare.

"My husband is a layer, this is not legal !" She continued. Mr Stank at this point, paled and looked at Steve in the eyes. It felt like he opened his eyes for the first time in mounts, he stared at his starved body from the feet to the head, lingering deeply on Steve embarrassed face, his dark circles under his tired eyes, his sunken cheeks, his deady white skin.

"I.... I didn't know he... he was in this conditions" Mr Stank said in a whisper.

"Go home boy ! You done enough for today !" He said patting his hand on Steve shoulder. Since the old lady was glaring at him with a murderous look he added.

“You stay home tomorrow too” He said with a sad tone.

“Can I make a call ?” Steve asked.

“Yeah go ahead !” Mr Stank answered, but Steve understood that he was obliged to say so, in fact everyone in the restaurant was glaring toward them in a strange silent. Just in that moment he felt that he was actually panting for the effort. He phoned Billy.

“Hey !”

“Hey Steve what’s up ?

“Can you come pick me up at the restaurant ?”

“Oh sure ! I’m coming, something happened ?” He sounded worried.

“Oh no no I just finished early !”

“Mmm ok I’ll be there soon”

“Ok thank you !” He hung up.

He changed his shoes and with his bag went outside, but before he thanked the old couple that helped him.

Billy arrived in no time, but Steve was so exhausted that he leaned on a wall, he closed his eyes because the pain was still pulsing in his ribs. He slowly climbed in the car. As soon as Billy saw him, he was shocked.

“God ! Are you ok ? You look horrible !”

“Oh... I’m fine !”

“You are panting as if you just ran a marathon !”

“Just a lot of work this morning”

“Mmm should I go to the near pharmacy to buy some painkillers ?” Steve looked at him as if he was reading his mind ! Probably he was looking like shit.

“I’ll take that as a yes !” Billy said. He pulled in front of the shop that was on the verge of closing. He went inside and came out with an orange bottle full of white pills.

“I’ll pay you for these when we arrive home !” Steve said.

“Don’t worry there is no need !”

He handed the thing to Steve who immediately opened it, not without struggling, he took one pill and swallowed it dry.

“You shouldn’t have it without water ! It’s bad ! Don’t do that !”

“Sorry...” It was all Steve could muster at that moment. Billy continued to give him worried looks with wide eyes.

“Does it hurt this much ? I mean it must be since you are breathing with your mouth and in a strange way too...” Billy said after some time. Steve just remained silent, he didn’t wanted to admit it but at the same time he couldn’t lie to Billy on the evidence !  
When they finally arrived home, Steve said.

“Tomorrow I won’t go to work, I’ll make dinner tonight”

“What ? No there is no way ! You are obviously exhausted from work !”

“You worked too ! And you already made dinner in these days ! Now it’s my turn”

“No no and no ! You can barely stand ! Please look at yourself, Steve ! What happened at the restaurant today ?”

“Please, I want to help you ! I can’t stand that I’m just a weight for you !” He sobbed.

“You are not a weight ! I’m just helping you out, you should accept the fact that you need an hand or two !”

“Please Billy ! I just want to be useful ! Let me help you with the dinner !”

“Ok, but you will stay seated ! Got it ?”

“Yeah, thank you !”

They started to work. Billy was heating some water for cooking, they decided to make sausages and mashed potatoes. Steve was cleaning them on the table. They started speaking, Billy said that that morning he had repaired a Mercedes 300SL Gullwing, he said that the car was amazing to drive, and Billy had the honour to make the drive test himself ! He was pretty happy Steve thought. When it was his turn to talk about his day, he couldn't not mention about Max.

“Today Max came to visit me” Steve said.

“What ? With the bunch of her friends ?”

“She came after school, alone”

“Oh... why ?”

“Well she wanted to ask me a favour”

“What kind of favour ?”

“She actually asked me if I could become your friend” They stayed in silence, with just the laboured breath of Steve.

“She said that you were all alone in this city and that she was worried that if you would have made bad friends, you could have become like you were in high school”

“She said so ?”

“She was afraid you would leave her behind, she is scared to lose you as a brother !”

“You know..... She - she said that because in Cali, last summer, I had just one friend and one night I was tired of that situation and went out with stupid boys. We got drunk pretty bad, we went climbing a building, two of them died in front of my eyes. I went home shocked and broken. Max was afraid that I would have break down for the trauma, I started drinking and became violent, but never touched her,

or at least this is what she said. From that moment she stayed near me and she helped me get through a lot of things I had inside, but couldn't get out. She is afraid that I will go down again"

"I'm so sorry Billy ! I didn't imagined ... if you need to speak to someone I can listen to you every time !"

"Thanks pretty boy ! I will surely do it !"

"So are these potatoes ready ?" Billy asked.

"Yes just the last one !" Steve started to peel it faster, but in this way he dropped some potato skin under the table. He handed the bowl with potatoes to Billy and he bended to took the skin. What he felt next made him scream, even if didn't wanted to. He fell from the seat on the concrete floor with a loud tund, he had forgot about the ribs !

Billy was turning him on his back.

"Steve ! Steve ! What happened ?! Steve can you hear me ?!?! Steve say something !" Steve wanted to answer, but he found it impossible to just make out a single word.

"I'm going to lift you and bring you in the bed !" Billy announced.

Steve felt his body being moved from strong arms. Nest the soft feeling of the mattress. He probably passed out, because he don't remember anything next.

Billy woke him up.

"Steve take another pill, I... I think you didn't broke anything. The painkillers should start to get in soon. You need to eat something."

"N-no" Billy just carefully lifted his head from the pillow.

"Come on you need to eat, we will wait until you can't feel pain anymore. But after you will eat with me. Ok ?" Billy put near his mouth first the pill, then a glass of water. Steve only swallowed slowly.

"Here you go ! Now be a good boy and call me when you start to not

feel pain anymore, I'll be in the kitchen !”

Luckily the pain started to wear off and, when he could move a bit without screaming, he called Billy. The other came in a rush, he helped him to sit on the edge of the bed and took his hands.

“At three you get up, one two ... three !” Billy pulled Steve up who got up, but he fell onto the other’s trained chest.

“I got you pretty boy, I got you !” Billy walked him to the nearest chair of the kitchen.

“How are you feeling ?”

“Better” Steve answered in a tired voice.

“Here, you need to eat !” Billy handed him a plate with mashed potatoes and two sausages.

They talked a bit during the meal. At the end Steve tried to get up by himself, but Billy blamed him.

“No ! Don’t move on your own or you will hurt yourself !”

“I can walk alone now”

“Sorry but I don’t trust you, pretty boy !” Billy helped him to the sofa.

They started to watch a film on a detective, but Steve was so tired that he drifted off sleeping after half an hour.

He woke up in the bed, alone, with light that came out of the curtains of the window. It must have been around 10:30am; Billy probably had let him sleep because he was at work. They had agreed that Steve could have slept till late and waited Billy to come home around 7:00pm for dinner. He slowly got dressed and went in the kitchen where he found a plate of pancakes, an orange bottle full of pills with a paper near. It was written : Good morning sleeping beauty, I’m at work. Be good and eat ! for anything call me ! See you. P.S. Don’t you dare to do something or I’ll kick your ass. REST !

Steve smiled at the words. He put his, by now, cold breakfast in the

oven. After eating he felt a bit sad and alone, now he was not used anymore at the emptiness of a “big” house. Even if had always lived alone and never had usual company, he was missing Billy. It was sweet to have somebody to return to after an hard day at work, somebody that take care of you when you are sick, someone that can cook you something, someone that speak to you and can listen to you when you have problems or you are feeling blue. And Steve had been feeling depressed for some time now, but the encounter with Billy had changed his whole life. Now he could eat three meals a day, when he hurt himself Billy is there to help him out, he can sleep in a real comfortable bed, he live in a heated house, an house that he could start to call home. He was lucky to have found Billy.

He kind of slept all day, just in the late afternoon he got up from the couch to cook something for dinner and take a shower. In the fridge he found some eggs, a piece of cheddar and some bread. He decided to make scramble eggs and toast the bread in a pan with some butter.

Around 7:15 Billy came home, finding Steve who was slowly lifting one plate a time and settle it on the table. There was a good smell when he entered.

“I’m home !” He shouted out. Steve probably didn’t notice him because he jolted a bit.

“Oh w-welcome home...” He said.

“What have you prepared for me pretty boy ?”

“Just some toasted bread and scramble eggs”

“Good ! There must be some ham too in the fridge, I’ll look for it”

“How was work ?”

“Oh today not big expensive cars, but Max came to visit me after school !”

“Oh really ? What did she said ?” Billy smirked at this.

“She, she was freaking out because today she and all the shitheads went to the restaurant, but you weren’t there !” Steve froze, he didn’t



thought about the kids, they probably went there without finding him, it must have never happened before.

“You should had been there, she was so worried that something happened to you, so I said that I were going to check on you” He laughed. “these kids are really attached to you !” Steve just blushed.

They started to prepare the table together. Billy was always making jokes on everything and Steve was so happy to have him back that he just laughed along even if it ached a bit.

“You tired ?” Billy asked.

“No, today was like an holiday ! I just slept !” Billy smiled at that.

“So we can stay up till late ?”

“You can if you want, but I will go to the bed as soon as I can, tomorrow I have to work !”

“You are worse than a dormouse, but I think it’s better if you go to work with some more energies !”

They enjoyed the meal and played cards after, of course Billy won every time. Steve was a bit angry about that because the other boy regained all his cockiness, but he was still funny towards him. Steve went to sleep while Billy stayed up a little more to see some television.

When Steve woke up he felt immediately a new person, he had more energy, he had gained some colour on his pale and sick skin. His torso was still blue but it didn’t pained too much. He went in the kitchen before Billy and decided to make some eggos for breakfast while he made some sandwich for the packet lunch . The other arrived with a big smile.

“You beat me today !”

“Ahaha when I was alone I used to get up earlier than this !” He joked, but when he took sight of Billy’s expression he regretted to have said it.

“You didn’t slept much” He paused. “I don’t know how could you go on like that for weeks. How did you manage to do all that stuff just by yourself !”

Steve didn’t answered, he didn’t know what to say, and was pretty sure that whatever he would have answered it would have make Billy even more irritable.

They ate in silence, drove in silence and went in silence at work. Just before closing the car door Steve wished Billy a good day.

All the day was sad, empty, blue. Outside was raining hard and he was cleaning where a client at lunch had spill a soup. He was thinking hard about his situation. Maybe Billy had enough of him, even Steve was a bit tired of himself. Without doubt Billy would have been better alone in his house. Steve was obviously a problem for him, his salary was a lot lower than his, he was a weigh. Steve couldn’t stand this situation anymore. He needed to talk straight to Billy as soon as he could. He hadn’t felt so blue in time, he didn’t know how to face the other man. Secretly Steve was a bit afraid of Billy, he was bigger and stronger than him, he could have killed Steve in an instant like at the Byers’s house years ago. At the same time he felt affection for the other boy, he had always been curious about the boy, he was different, he was fire. Steve had been fire too but his had burned out long time ago and now he was just a mere extinguished candle. He was tired to fight more every day to survive at the lowest. He was so young but he already couldn’t live anymore longer. He had thought about suicide for a long time but he hadn’t the courage, probably he would have just disappeared living a note for the kids to explain that he was going to somewhere away to find a better work while in reality his body would have lied at the bottom of their beloved lake. He needed a person like Billy, but Billy didn’t need him. How could he pretend to be important for Billy, how dare he thought that Billy would have took him if it wasn’t for pity. He was depressed, he didn’t need a diagnosis to know that, he had been for a long time, the upside down had changed him forever. The kids were the good part of it, but after it he had lost his only love Nancy, he had really loved her, he had lost all his friends, he had lost his crown, he had lost his position in the basketball team, he had lost his family, he had lost his home, he had lost his dreams, he had started to lose his mind, he lost all, he lost everything. He was lost. Billy had

been a light in his darkness with his kindness and his positive side, but that morning that light hadn't irradiated Steve at all, that fire wasn't of kindness but boredom and anger. Steve didn't want Billy to turn on him, he didn't want to make Billy become depressed or violent like before because of him. The best option was leaving Billy alone. He would have broken the promise made to Max, in that way, but he couldn't go on like this, his mind would soon or later make some bad twist and he would have ruined his relationship with Billy Hargrove forever. It was just a matter of time, he knew it.

At the end of the work he went outside to wait for the Camaro to pick him up. After half an hour he convinced himself that Billy had decided to live alone and that he was trying to make Steve understand it with not coming to pick him up. He started to walk under the rain that had never stopped. He liked it that way. The rain was kind of participating at his grief, he felt like a little drop of rain with all the other around. It was all so touching that he started to cry. The only noises were the ticking of the rain and his retained coughs.

Finally he reached the house, he opened the door after drying at his best his tears. Immediately a voice was shouting to him.

"Steve ! Steve !! Where have you been ?!?! I went to the restaurant to find out that you had already left ! You could have waited ! Look at yourself, you are dipping water everywhere !" Steve was surprised to see the sincere worry on Billy's face.

"I waited for you, but you didn't come so I just came home by foot" He said coughing quietly.

"I called the restaurant to say that I was going to arrive late ! They didn't tell you that ?"

"Oh no they didn't..." So this was it !

"I had to take a car to the workshop, but it was on the other side of the town, I ran late and I ... Why are you crying ?" Was he crying ? He had dried his tears accurately, why was Billy asking him that ? He didn't want to show himself weak in front of Billy anymore.

“Crying ? No, no what are you talking about ?”

“Don’t think that I’m so stupid, you have red irritated eyes and I don’t think it was because of the rain !” Why Billy always have to know everything ? Steve had hided his deepest secrets for years from people who knew him well and spent time together often; with Billy it was impossible, it was like Steve’s mind was transparent for him. Steve hated not having secrets because all his weakened state was showing.

“Billy we need to talk” Steve said with trembling voice.

“We can talk ,but first you dry yourself or you will catch a cold !” Billy said without looking at him.

Steve changed from the uniform. They set at the table facing each other. Billy talked first.

“So what do you want to talk about ?”

“I want to thank you for everything you did and you are still doing for me”

“Buuut ....?”

“But I can’t go on like this, I’m just a problem for you. Even if I wanted I couldn’t pay you back for the hospitality you are giving me, for the food and for the company.

I think it’s better if I go back to my apartment, if I lived there for two years I can make it. I don’t want to be a burden, if you want we could stay in contact and go out sometime, just as Max would have it to be, but I can’t stay here anymore. I’m ruining your life, making it boring and bad. I don’t want it to be this way. I’m a lost cause Billy, you don’t need to cope with all my shit. I’m sorry, I hope one day to repay you” He didn’t have the courage to look Billy in the eyes.

“Steve” He paused. “All this is bullshit !” He said with a firm voice. That word stuck in Steve mind, he looked shocked right in Billy face. He started to hyperventilating, sweating, paling, for a moment he was back at that party, every word still well impressed in his mind. He had zoned out because Billy was calling him with a strange face.

“Hey ! Steve are you listening ?”

“Yeah ! Uh.. well no, no sorry” Billy was looking at him trying to read his mind.

“You can’t go back to your previous life style ! We had already agreed that you would have stayed here ! How can you think to be a burden ?! You are the only one in this city that I know and that I can trust ! You help me with house stuff ! I know I can talk to you because you did and are still doing the same for my sister. You are an amazing person that can’t see how cool he is !” Now Billy started to cry. “I don’t want to lose you too. You want to leave me too ? I bet this is the problem ! You are still scared of me, you are scared that one day I will hurt you bad like at the Byers’s ! I’m just a monster, everybody is just scared of me !” Steve was without words.

“What do you mean by lose me too ?”

“I...” He stopped.

“If you don’t want to tell me ...”

“No no it’s just that ... Well back in California I said I was with a friend, but... in reality he was more than a friend ... we stayed together. But one day my father found out that I was in a relationship with a boy. He...” Billy sobbed hard. “He... he found Josh and... and he nearly killed him. He stayed at the hospital for three days, but his injuries were too complicated, he died as soon after the second surgery” Steve was shocked he didn’t know anything about that, Max had never said a word about it.

“If only I was there ! I could have made something, I could have protected him ! I could have saved him ! I ...” He started to cry and sob and couldn’t go on. Steve got up immediately to go and hug hard him. Seeing Billy in that state made his heart ache. He had suffered so much for love.

“I’m so sorry Billy ! Don’t blame yourself ! It wasn’t your fault !”

They stayed embracing each other for a long time till Billy calmed down. He, then, looked at Steve.

“Please don’t leave me alone” he whispered with a broken voice.

“I won’t leave !”

Their noses were touching. They were so close, they looked in each other eyes for a moment, Steve was the one to make the move and kissed Billy. It was automatic, like he used to do with Nancy, but he hadn’t the right to do the same with Billy. He pulled away immediately feeling to have invaded a space he shouldn’t have with the other man. Suddenly Billy grabbed him and kissed him back, the second kiss was long, passionate. Steve pulled away because of a cough fit. Billy was looking him with concerned eyes.

“I’m fine” He said.

“So now are you going to stay ?” Billy asked with a smirk.

“After this I think I can !” They laughed together.

Steve was happy, he had never thought about Billy in that way, but from the first time, he had seen him again, something had moved his heart. Billy had changed a lot from what he was in high school. He liked him a lot.

## 9. Chapter 9

That night they passed the time cuddle on the couch. Steve just enjoyed to spend some time with a person that really returned his feelings. It was like that the shadow of Nancy had finally disappeared. He was free to try some new relationships. After an hour he started to feel tired.

“I think I will go to sleep” Billy watched him.

“You sure ? It’s still pretty early !”

“I’m sorry, but tomorrow it’s Friday and if you want we will stay up till late !”

“Deal !”

Steve got up, immediately he felt cold, his body was aching like he had the flu, his bones were hurting. Probably it was all because he had been under the cold rain, and till a second before he was hugged to Billy, who seemed a human stove, and with a pail all around himself. He went to the bathroom, the mirror was showing him that he wasn’t really well. He was pale, but what concerned him was seeing his blue veins in his neck, hands and arms. It was strange, he was so cold. He went immediately in the bed to try to warm himself up a bit. After some minutes, Billy went in the bed too. He took gently Steve hands, but was upset. Steve seemed frozen, like it had felt the night of the accident. It felt wrong.

“Steve ! You are freezing ! What’s wrong ?”

“I’m just feeling a bit cold”

“You are trembling ! Come near !”

Steve came near Billy’s hot body. The other pulled the small trembling boy near him, embracing him with his strong arms. He could smell Steve hairs, it was a scent of rain. They slept like that. Billy was kind of scared of Steve’s body. He was really skinny, he had admitted to be often sick, he over worked himself too much, and the

fact that he had lost his body heat in a little time and couldn't heat up himself even with a bunch of blankets, was scaring him. Billy was worried that his body wasn't healthy enough to get better, like cancer patients that are always at the hospital and can have a relapse. A thought came to his mind: there was a probability that he could lose Steve too ? The other boy seemed so fragile and ill. For how long he could have gone on without Billy ? Why nobody had saw the conditions he was in ? How long it will take him to become healthy again ? Why couldn't he ask for help when he was in so much pain ?

Billy felt a little sad that Steve couldn't trust anyone, even him, that he never said anything when he was in pain, when he was feeling bad, when he was cold. He didn't even complained when he was starving, before he met Billy again. His body, after two years of fevers, cold nights, hard work, sicknesses, malnutrition and lack of sleep and rest, was ruined maybe beyond repair. He had lost his muscles that he have when he used to play basketball with Billy. When Billy had tempted to his ribs after the accident, he had saw on his back and shoulder old scars that he had never seen before, they weren't from any kind of fight, they seemed more from a wild animal. Steve had secrets that even Billy couldn't catch from the other mind. These reminded him about the panic attack he had on Saturday. He was scared of something that he had called demo-something, he didn't really understood. But what concerned him the most was the fact that Steve was absolutely terrified of it. He probably was searching for his bat in his bag that Billy had put near the entrance, Steve not finding it, had put himself in front of the bedroom door like he was about to fight it instead of running away. In the following days Billy hadn't slept much, how could he sleep while near him there was a very sick boy who could have died without the notice of anyone ? In these nights he could note that Steve had a lot of nightmares. His face was always contorted in a concerned expression. He often said the kids names, or some warnings like : run, or go away, get safe, go hide, stay behind me, don't hurt them. It was clear that he had have a trauma in the past and he didn't gave it the necessary attention.

The next day Steve woke up to find himself wrapped in a hug by Billy. It made him smile, he was happy that things had turned out this way. He dressed and prepared some toasted bread with jam for



breakfast. Billy entered the kitchen with a big smile.

“Good morning pretty boy ! Today is Friday !!!” He exclaimed giving Steve a slap on his bottom. Steve was a bit embarrassed about it, even if, thinking of it, Billy used to do it to every member of the basketball team at school in the changing room. It was kind of normal, he did it to tease the others players and also to impose his person over the others.

“Good morning ! Yeah it the last day of work for this week !” Steve answered.

Billy started to make some sandwiches for lunch, he was really fast, probably because he was hungry and wanted to have breakfast as soon as possible !

Billy took him with the camaro in front of the restaurant, but before Steve could get out, Billy pulled him by the thin jacket and kissed him. When Steve let go Billy smirked.

“Don’t forget your lunch !” He said showing him the brown package.

“Thanks... good work !” Steve said with red face.

Work was a bit more than usual, but it was Friday so everybody wanted to eat junk food and not cook at all, in fact the restaurant was full. There were a lot of school students, but not his kids. The bad part of having as clients young boys and girls, was that they made a real mess of dirt under the tables, so when it was time to clean them it became really difficult to do it bent under with a broom that couldn’t bent ! As he thought he passed the afternoon crouching between fallen fries and stuck gums. His thoughts were always drifting towards Billy, he was distracted from his work, in fact it took him more that it should have been. He wasn’t really seeing what he was doing that when he was getting off some old gums that were stuck on a leg of a table, he cut himself between his index and thumb of his left hand with the palette knife. It was painful, but in these days he had bared some bigger pains, and this one in comparison wasn’t similar. He just put on a plastic glove that usually the cook used and went on with his work. Using that hand was annoying, after some time some blood started to leak out on his forearm, he had

always to dry it with a tissue.

Luckily the day went on fast, he wasn't even mentally present on what he was doing. His mind was with Billy. The other man was so handsome, he had a body of an athlete, he had muscles from the work he did, plus his tan skin showed it even more. His eyes were the same colour of the sea of California, that Steve had never seen but Billy had described him so much. His hairs were like rays of sunshine. Steve had to admit that he was attracted to him.

At dinner he was just looking forward the moment he would have seen his lover again. There were some Students from the school that came with friends or the girlfriend to have dinner together before going to a party or get drunk in a local cheap bar. Steve could see himself in those boys before the upside down changed his life forever. He used to go out with Tommy and Carol, get drunk or high at a party of someone he didn't even know the name and go back at Saturday morning in his big empty house. He had never admitted it, but when the booze finished he always felt so alone, usually he just stopped that thought with more drinking till Sunday afternoon, in order to get sober for school on Monday. It had been his way to address his problems, but now he could understand that he was just denying them and running away from all his shit. It was too hard for him to cope with all that without a person to rely on, a true friend. Alcohol was just one of the easy exits from the reality he had to face. It was because of the realisation, after breaking up with Nancy, that he hadn't even one friend to confide to, that he made him fall into the black hole of depression. It wasn't serious, but it was still now his main thought. The relationship with Billy had brought some rays of light in his darkness. Billy needed to become his Sun, he needed him to shine on his poor tired soul and warm it up.

Finally his turn finished. He literally, he ran outside although Billy were never on time. He waited for him with a big smile on his lips, he couldn't restrain it, he was just so happy ! Billy at last arrived and Steve immediately climbed in the passenger seat.

"Hey ! How was-" He couldn't finish the sentence because the other man pulled him in a hard kiss, they smooched for some time. Then Billy pulled out.

“I missed you !” Steve smiled even more.

“I missed you too !” They exchanged some soft short kisses, than The driver started the engine and drove towards home.

They entered the house. It was like entering in an home for the first time toward Steve. His heart warmed up.

“So what do we prepare for dinner ?” Billy asked.

“Oh I don’t know...”

“What about some pasta with sauce ?”

“That’s perfect ! I’ll help you !”

They changed from their uniforms. Steve went to the bathroom to remove the glove. The cut was deep and still bled a bit. He decided to wash the glove and put it on again. He was putting on a pot with water for the pasta wen Billy entered the room.

“What did you do to your hand ?”

“Oh this ?” He asked raising his left hand. “I just got distracted at work and cut myself with the palette knife ! It’s nothing though !”

“It doesn’t seem to me nothing ! It’s still bleeding !” Billy took Steve hand to remove the glove, more blood came out of it.

“When did you cut yourself ?”

“This afternoon I was trying to get off some old gums under the tables”

“It had bleed for hours ?”

“Oh no I don’t think so, before I removed the glove to wash it ... and maybe I had reopened the cut ?”

“Why don’t you say anything to me ?” He could tell that Billy was angry.

“I don’t understand Steve ! Why you keep these things from me. I’m

not going to blame you, but you need to tell me !”

“I’m sorry I thought it wasn’t this important...”

“You know that the fact that it is still bleeding after hours means that your body is not healing it. Your blood should have had already clotted. Something isn’t right...”

“Billy, it’s just a cut ! Don’t worry about it ! I wasn’t careful enough when I removed the glove ! It’s not a big deal” Steve smiled to the other. Billy just glanced back to Steve.

“And these ? What are they for ?” He said pointing to his palm. He could see the signs of his nails. When he was in pain he had embed them to bear it.

“Oh you see when my ribs were hurting it was hard and I squeezed a bit too much my hands” Billy was watching him as if he was searching the new lie.

“I used to do that too !” He finally said. He went to the bathroom and returned with a first aid kit.

“Now give me your hand” He attempted to the cut, sterilizing the wound and bandaging it. Steve was a bit embarrassed in fact he turned all red. When Billy finished, he went straight for a kiss that left Steve even redder.

“From now on you tell me anything !” He said in a serious tone.

“Yeah sure ... thank you”

They had fun making dinner together. Billy was really funny and it was also interesting to hear about his work in the machine shop. It was like he had already all sort of adventures. Steve had to admit that he envied Billy a bit, he had the work he liked and it was enjoying doing it too. Steve on the other hand had to go out of the police academia because of his parents. He had asked at the police station and with his grades he had some options. In the best case he could pass in three months the training general session at the academia and then being moved to Hawkins to Hopper’s office, in order to complete his formation for becoming a policeman. But for

doing this things he needed a lot of money, and he had none. He had continue to study on his used books for passing his exam as soon as possible, when he could afford them. Lately he had stopped to study because when he tried to concentrate it was impossible, like his brain hadn't the energy to function. He had asked this thing to Dustin without mentioning that he was affected, his friend had said that it probably was because when a person don't eat or eat less than what he should and burn all of the food with activities as moving around, your brain haven't the right food to function because it only go with carbs, so without them it couldn't function properly. Haring that was a bit scary, but what could Steve do if he needed to work as a dog from dawn to sunset ? Now, living with Billy he could start again with his books !

"You promised to do late today, remember ?" Billy asked.

"Yeah .... What are you thinking ?" Steve watched Billy's lips grew in a smirk.

"Why don't we go out for a drive ?" He offered.

"On a drive ? Mmmm ok if you want to !" Steve didn't know what Billy was planning to do on a drive at this late in the night on Friday apart from going to a Bar and get drunk as hell.

They went out of Hawkins, the sky in the city was pitch black and the town was all illuminated for the night life. While in the country side it was all different. There was a different sky, he could see the stars, so many stars that he remained with the mouth open. Billy just laughed seeing Steve being so excited for that surprise. The driver pulled the car in an open space near the little road Steve had never seen before. They climbed out. It was really cold and it seemed that something was falling on them like rain but there were no clouds, probably it was dew or hoarfrost. Even if it was dark the sky there seemed blue and illuminated by all the stars and the thin moon that greeted them. Everything that surrounded them was black. Steve raised his hand toward the blue sky, even if he known that the bandage was with all he could make out was his outline. He hadn't a shadow anymore, he was like a black silhouette, everything around him was just a shape. They seated on the hood of the car, Billy put around them a blanked and pulled Steve in a big and warm hug.

“Billy ! This is fantastic ! I had never seen anything like this before ! Thank you very much for bringing me here” They kissed and snogged for some time than Billy spoke.

“You know I find out the beauty of the night sky when my car went out of fuel !”

“Really ?”

“Yeah I had a fight with my dad again and I was so angry that I drove till my car stopped !” He laughed. “At first I was furious ! I started to kick everything around me, but then I catch sight of the sky. I was fascinated from it, the stars abducted my eyes. It was like it calmed me down in an instant. I stayed all night watching the movements of the stars. It felt like magic !”

“Wow ! What an adventure ! When did it happened ?”

“It was last year summer”

“Well it must had been a beautiful night !”

“Yeah it was, but today is better !”

“Why ?”

“Because you are with me” They kissed again. Billy had a sweet side that Steve hadn’t even imagined.

Hours passed as the zodiac moved on their heads. The sounds of the night accompanied their date, apart from some coughs from Steve. It was like they didn’t need words to communicate, their relationship was beyond that. When it started to get too cold Steve started to tremble a bit because even Billy heat was starting to wear off.

“Let’s go home !” Billy said taking gently the blanket.

The car seemed frozen to Steve that now, out of the warm cover, was searching a new source of heat. Billy had some problems starting the engine, but in the end they made it. The heater of the car was too slow for Steve, and now that he wasn’t distracted anymore by the stars he could feel all the tiredness of his body and the coldness in his

limbs. It was pretty late, Billy seemed a bit tired too so in order to not fall asleep they put on some music on the radio. They arrived home around three o'clock, exhausted, still cold, ready to sleep, but happy.

They slept curled up together, for the first time in many years Steve didn't had nightmares of the upside down or the Demogorgon.

## 10. Max visit

When Steve woke up, he could sense that it was pretty late. Billy was watching him.

“Good morning pretty boy !” He said kissing Steve.

“Good morning to you too love !” Steve replied smiling wide. “What’s time is it ?”

“Oh it’s just eleven and half !” Billy laughed. “Tomorrow Max should come visit me !”

“Mmm what are you planning ? You want to tell her ?” Steve softly asked.

“I still don’t know” Billy said brooding.

“Does she know that you are... into men ?” He asked quietly for not agitate the other.

“I never told her, but after what happened in California I think she suspect something, even if she don’t know the whole story !”

“If you prefer we can wait” Steve said.

“No, I want to tell her as soon as possible. I’m tired to hide myself from my family”

“Ok ! We will do it together !” Steve said kissing Billy.

“I love you” The other admitted.

“I love you too”

They go up and eaye breakfast and then Steve decided to clean a bit the house, to make it look better when Max would have come. Billy helped him out for the hard tasks like moving the sofa or put on the table the chairs when the floor was wet.

In the afternoon Billy invited Steve going to the Starcourt mall. He



had even worked there for some time, he agreed because the fridge was kind of empty, he needed to make some shopping. Billy's hunger wasn't like Steve's.

Their idea was inviting Max at lunch and starting the conversation at the end of it. Billy was really agitated, she was his only family left. Steve was a bit worried too, it felt like he was using Billy, but he was not that kind of person ! He was afraid that this relationship could ruin the bond he had with the kids, they looked up to him so much. Every time one of them had a problem or needed someone to talk to, Steve was the person. He listened to them and gave all the best advice for them. He was like a parent in every situation. But at the same time he wanted to be happy with Billy. He wanted to be part of Billy's life ! He couldn't let him go anymore. He had lost everything, and now that love was back in his life he couldn't let it go so easily. He needed Billy, he was fresh air on his shitty existence. When you lose everything and find yourself alone with nothing, it's in that moment that you realise how much you had really passed up ! Steve had learned it on his skin, the wounds were still bleeding. If Max wouldn't have accepted their relationship he didn't know who he would choose. The thought kept him awake all the night even if his body was in so much need of rest.

The morning slowly came, the sun started to leak out the blinds, he tiredly got up. Billy had had nightmares the whole night, he had turned on himself so many times that Steve had to pull the blankets for covering himself. He could tell what he had dreamed of...

They started to cook together without saying a single word. Billy actually was sweating, his eyes weren't focused on anything in the real world. Steve noticed it so he tried to speak to him.

"She will understand" He said patting an hand on his shoulder. Billy jolted.

"What did you say ?" He asked not having heard a single word. Steve was actually worried about him. Billy was eating himself inside with his fears, he needed to talk to him before it was too late.

"I said that you can talk to me about your fears ! You don't have to suffer alone Billy ! I'm here and I won't go anywhere ! Trust me, she will understand, she love you so much ! You are her big brother, and

nothing will change that !” Billy was looking at him with fear all over his face. It was obvious that he was afraid to ruin his bond with her. Then he started to cry and Steve pulled him in a tight hug. His heart ached seeing how Billy really needed a person to confide to, also because he wasn’t sure 100 % about Max. He just hoped to be right !

Max arrived on time, luckily everything was ready. She seemed surprised to see Steve there too, but in a good way. He explained to her that he was hanging out with Billy and they had agreed to have lunch together. The meal went smoothly, Max talked a lot about school and also the others of the group. Billy was patiently listening to her, but Steve could tell that he was thing about the single words that he was going to say.

When Billy started to put the cups for the ice cream, he finally spoke.

“Max, I need to tell you something” His voice tone was grave serious.

“Ok...” Max said in a suspicious way.

Billy tried to speak, but no words came out of his mouth. Steve saw how he was struggling and decided to do something or better his mouth moved on his own before the brain could do.

“We are in a relationship” He said all in a breath. Max didn’t seem shocked.

“Well I know you are in a relationship, I myself asked Steve to be your friend...” She said a bit confused.

“Ehm we ...” Steve couldn’t go on more, he couldn’t even look at Max in the eyes.

“There is more than a friendship” Billy said. Max seemed more confounded now.

“You are together like me and Lucas ?” She asked. Billy just nodded, Steve blushed like a tomato. Some minutes passed like the time had been frozen in that instant. The ice cream was melting, but nobody seemed to notice. Both the boys were looking intensively to the girl, she seemed to be doing a test, she was so concentrated.

Then she nodded and took a spoon and the ice cream.

“Ok” She said smiling while putting a mouthful spoon of icecream in her mouth. Steve and Billy didn’t believe theirs hears.

“You are not opposed to this ?” Billy asked in a shaking voice.

“Why would I ?” She said with more confusion on her face.

“So you are not angry with me because I didn’t maintain the promise ?” Steve asked.

“You did maintain the promise ! You didn’t left him alone ! Actually I’m happy that you two had found each other, you both need someone to love and to take care !”

“You are not disgusted of me ?” Billy asked in a low voice looking on the floor.

“God No ! How could I ? You are my brother and I wish your happiness, you had always had problems to find a matching soul, but now I think you had find it ! It doesn’t matter if you love a boy or a girl, what’s important is that your sentiment is true and returned, like us ! You will always be my big Bro, no matter what !” She got up and went to hug Billy. It was cute to see how much they really cared for each other, Steve thought. Billy kissed her on the cheek.

“Come on let’s eat the ice cream or it will be all melted !” Max said in a cheering way. Billy laughed hard, Steve laughed too but it turned out like a cough. When it ended Billy was eyeing him in a suspicious way.

They ate the now just cream with so much joy. Billy was an another person, he had set aside a weight that had harassed him for long. They spent the afternoon talking freely.

Max waved off from the road, now the boys were alone. Steve had enjoyed the visit, Max was a really sweet girl and a great sister for Billy. As soon as the door was closed Billy pulled Steve in a long and passionate kiss, they pulled out just to breath.

“I told you” Steve said with a smirk.

“Yeah I know” Billy smiled.

They started to clean up the table, now that Max wasn't around Steve could feel how tired he really was. He hadn't slept even an hour, he had got up early in order to prepare the lunch, he had stayed the whole morning standing while cooking and now all he could think of was the bed. Making matters worse his cough wasn't improving much even if he constantly took the medicines Billy had gave him.

When they finished Steve went to the bedroom without a word. He just crushed on the soft blanket. Billy came in too, Steve immediately put himself seated, in a more normal position. He didn't wanted the other to worry over him for nothing.

“What are you doing ?” He asked.

“I'm getting ready for the bed” He said half lying.

“You seem tired”

“You too are !”

“Not as much as you !” Billy laughed, Steve too but the cough wasn't leaving him alone.

“Come on let's rest pretty boy !”

Staying in the same bed with his now new boyfriend brought a certain warmth in Steve's heart. He was happy : Billy loved him, Max hadn't rejected their love, everything in his life was turning in a good way. He just needed to tell Dustin and the others about his new relationship, but probably Max had already done it, knowing her.

They cuddle up whispering sweet words to each others.

## 11. Chapter 11

The next weeks was like heaven for Steve, living with Billy was the best thing had happened to him. Not only because his health had improved a lot, but because he had forgot how it felt to be in love with someone that returned it. Work hadn't been too hard, now things didn't seemed so heavy, he didn't came home exhausted like he did when he still lived alone, his body was recovering. The kids had been enthusiastic that now he could live in a better way. Max, Dustin and Jane had wanted to know every detail of how they had arrived to start a relationship. At first Steve was a bit abashed, but then he enjoyed to speak with them.

Work was stressing as ever, but now he had more energies, lifting things didn't seemed to be that hard. He was doing so much better.

One night Billy had took him from work with a strange grin on his face.

"Why are you smiling like that ?" Asked Steve laughing. Billy grinned widely.

"I have a surprise for you !" He said in a joyful manner.

"What is it ?" Steve asked excited.

"Oh no pretty boy, no way that I'll tell you !"

"You didn't had to" He smiled.

Billy had all this attentions towards him that nobody had never had with him. He felt wanted, loved, finally there was somebody that he could love with all his heart.

When they were near their house Billy told him to close his eyes. Steve did as he was told. Billy parked then went to help Steve out of the car. Curiosity was raising in Steve mind.

"Now you can open your eyes"

Steve looked in front of him and couldn't believe what he saw. Parked near their apartment there was his old BNW, but now it

seemed more like new. Steve was out of breath, he couldn't imagine that Billy had fixed his car !

"How ? But ? Why ?" He was speak less.

"I knew that you were really attached to it, but didn't had enough money for the needed repairs, so I kind of... well I fixed it for you !" He said smiling.

Steve jumped on him, he hugged Billy as hard as he could. He kissed him passionately, he wanted Billy, no he needed him. He thanked him so much for the big surprise he had done thinking how much more work he had to take at the officine.

"Oi ! Take a look at the inside of the car before I take you to the bed !" Billy said in a dirty manner. Steve ran to open the car. All the insides were new, Billy had done a really good work ! Steve wanted so much to drive it, he hadn't drove in a long time. Probably this desire was showing a lot because Billy said :

"Why don't you try it on the street ?"

"Really ? You sure ?"

"Of course pretty boy ! But when we came home I want you all for me !"

"I'm always all yours !"

They kissed, then climbed in the new vehicle, Steve was so excited. He took Billy out of town where he could drove more freely. Feeling the air from the windows and through his hairs was like flying. They laughed all way.

When they finally went back home, it was late and the sky was dark. As soon as Steve entered the house Billy took him bridal style. They kissed passionately, Billy threwed him on the bed, but still in a gentle way. Then he went on top of Steve and whispered in his ear :

"I want you"

They did it for the first time. It felt amazing. Steve had never done

something like that. They just woke up exhausted all curled up to each other.

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

sorry this one is short... also I wanted to apologise for the love part. I don't know anything about sex and this kind of stuff so I'll leave it to your imagination !

Thanks for everything

## 12. Chapter 12

Steve was happy like he had never been for years now, but inside his heart there was still something that he wanted to do. Something that would make him a man. He really wanted to finish the police academy.

There were just a few problems : he didn't have money, he had already lost years, he hadn't studied in months because of his health, he would have to stay away for at least three months. The fact was that he really wanted to become a policeman. He had had this dream since the encounter with the upside down, he had found a real father in Jim Hopper and the man had inspired him. He liked to protect the people he loved. The policeman was the work of his dreams, but now it seemed just a fantasy.

He didn't want to tell Billy about it, his boyfriend was doing so much already. Also if Steve was accepted again, he would have to leave Billy for a long time and he didn't want to bare with all the problems of a long distance relationship. He didn't want to lose Billy, just the thought of it made his stomach turn over. So he just hid it from his lover in order to save himself from everything that could have happened.

He had even asked information about what he would have to do if he decided to start again his studies. They had told him that he needed to pass five different exams, complete his formation in Boston and then come back in Hawkins and start his trial period. They even gave him all the necessary documents.

One afternoon, Steve was looking at all the papers, trying to find a way to complete his dream. He was alone at home, Billy had went out with Max on a dinner just between brothers.

Hours passed but he was so absorbed that he didn't notice it. He had covered the kitchen table with all the things they had gave him. His dinner lay forgotten on the counter.

Steve was looking the part about the payment : he wanted to cry. He would have never reached that amount of money ! He was so immerse into reading it, that he didn't heard Billy entering the



apartment.

“Oi ! What are you doing ? What’s all these sheets ?” Billy asked. He startled Steve that jumped up from his chair.

“Oh nothing ! It’s nothing ! You are home early !” Steve panicked. He put himself in front of Billy to block his sight.

“I’m not early, I’m late this time !” Billy said confused.

“Oh Yeah yeah and how it was the dinner ?”

Steve was sweating and adrenaline was running into his veins.

“Steve, what are you hiding from me ?” Billy was watching him with a serious expression.

“Nothing, absolutely nothing !” He lied.

Billy just moved him without effort and took a good look about the page that Steve was reading just a moment before.

“No Billy please ! It’s nothing ! Please !”

“What’s all this money for ?”

Steve stayed silent, then Billy noticed the labelled on top of the pages : restart of studies for police academy.

“Billy I can explain !”

“Steve ! This is beautiful ! You can go back to the academia ? Why didn’t you tell me ?” Billy said smiling.

“What ? You - you are not angry ?”

“Angry ? Why should I ? I mean, I’m a bit disappointed that you didn’t told me sooner, but this is awesome Steve !”

“I don’t want to go” Steve affirmed.

“What ? Why ?”

“It’s not my dream anymore” Steve lied, in reality he was afraid to lose Billy in this way.

“What the fuck are you talking about ? You say it all the time that you would have been a cop ! What changed your mind ?”

Steve stayed silent, he didn’t wanted to disappoint Billy.

“Is it for the money ? Steve ! We have already talked about this ! I have this amount, you will repay it when you will have your own salary for a policeman ! You don’t have to worry about it !”

“it’s not just that, I need to stay away for three months and have four exams on everything that I missed in these years. I won’t see you for three whole fucking months Billy !”

“What’s the problem ? You won’t lose me ! I’m yours and nothing could change that !”

Steve could feel fresh tears leaking down his cheeks. Billy moved closer and hugged him. Feeling Billy smell made Steve calm down.

“We will make it ! Trust me !”

Steve smiled at him when they pulled away. Billy smiled back.

“Come on let’s sleep !”

They were already with pyjamas when from the kitchen, Billy screamed :

“Steve Harrington ! Come here immediately !” He sounded furious.

“What did I do this time ?”

“Better what didn’t you do ?!!!?”

Billy was pointing at his full plate on the counter. Oh shit, Steve thought.

“I... well I forgot to eat it”

Billy sighed picking his nose with one hand.

“How many times do I have to tell you that you can’t forget to eat ??!”

“I’m sorry, I was reading all that documents and it just went out of my mind”

“You need to eat, ok ? I don’t want you to become sick again ! Tomorrow you will eat it !”

“Sorry” Steve felt a little ashamed.

“It’s all right ! But you need to be more careful !” Billy said approaching him. Billy saw that Steve was sad and that he didn’t meant it.

“Come on pretty boy ! Give me a smile !”

Steve was embarrassed as ever, but still smiled. Billy kissed him, and they went to bed.

#### **Author's Note:**

Sorry for not posting as often as I would, but living is complicated and I can't always find the needed time. Comments and likes are really appreciated, but they are not a necessity ! But if you find mistakes or something turns up, please let me know so that I can fix it !

Thanks for everything !